



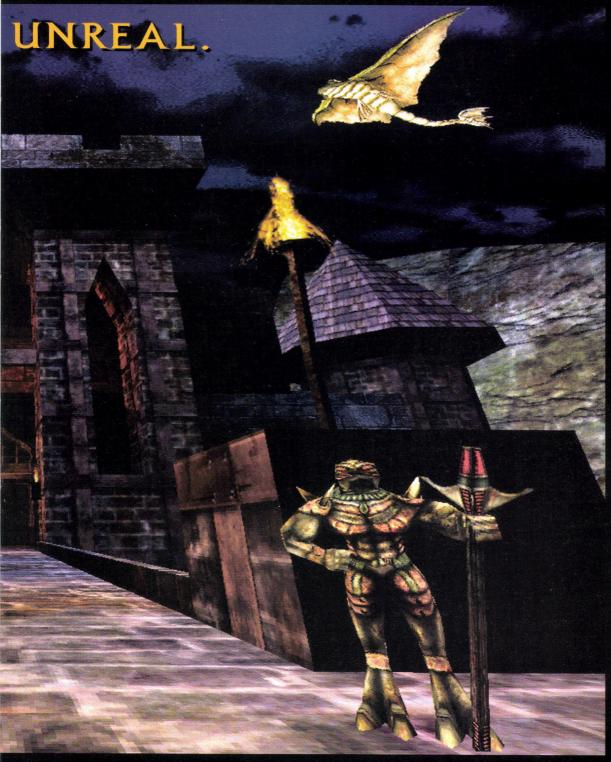
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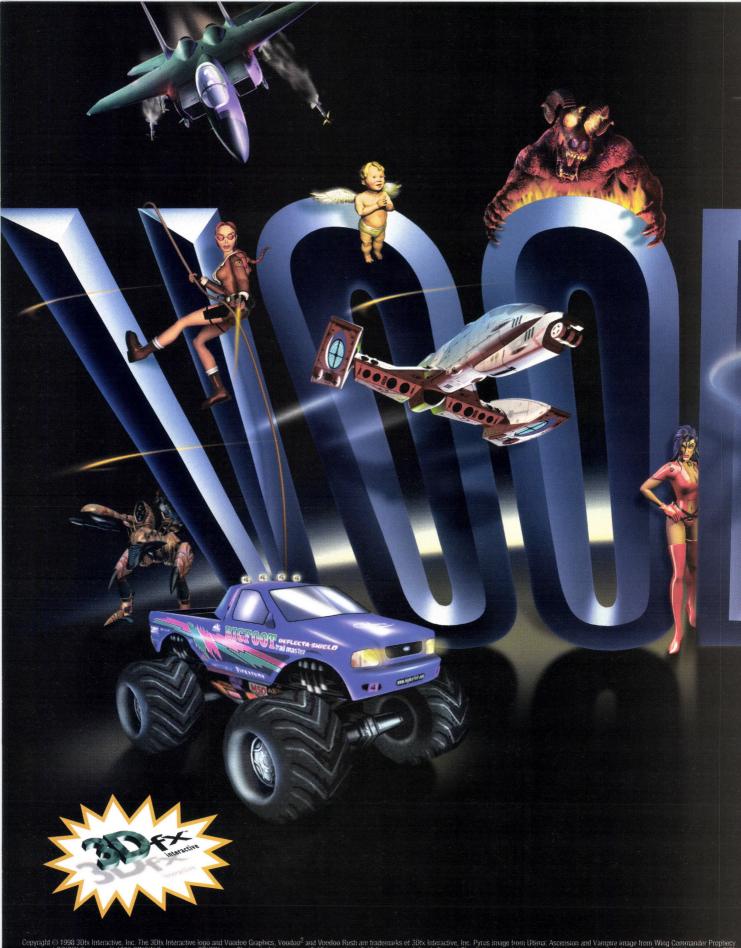


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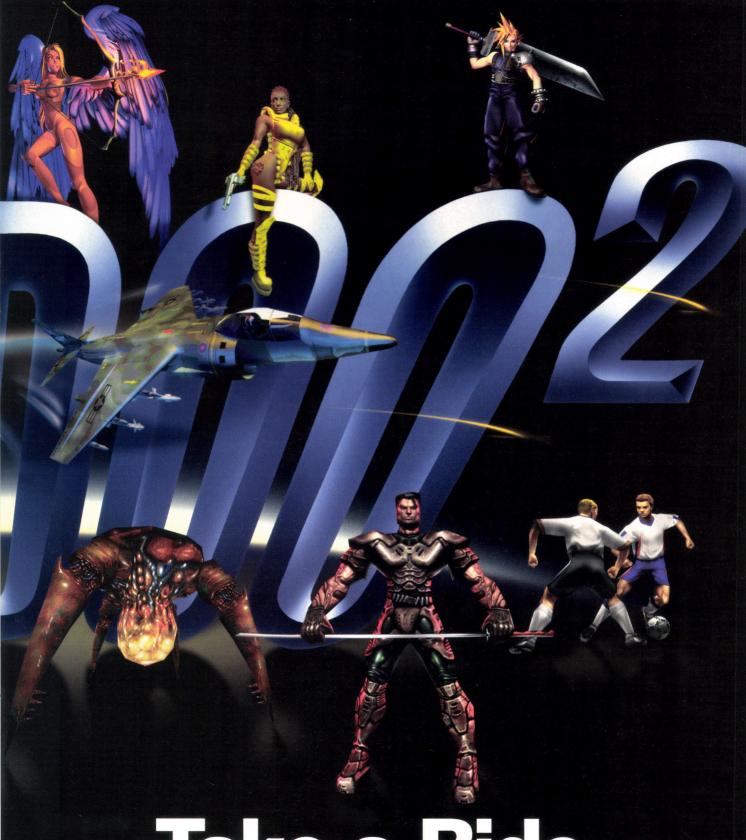
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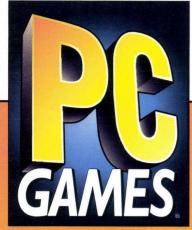
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APRIL 1998 What's Inside

PC Games Online has joined with Happy Puppy and Games Domain to provide even more great gaming coverage! For more details.

see www.pcgames.com.





Check Six, Nine, Twelve... By the PC Games Flight Team

Wanna be a flying ace? We'll help you decide which cockpit to jump into with reviews of all the latest flight sims, a look at what's in development, and a scorecard of titles that have appeared in PC Games over the past year.

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58 TA: Core Contingency By George T. Chronis

its new story, 100 new units, 25 missions, and full-featured Map and Mission Editor. With the help of Hefeweizen, we get an exclusive first look, plus the lowdown on TA2 and Cavedog's future.

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66 Easter Eggs **By Shane Mooney**

Hop on down the bunny trail as we uncover the secret spots and in-jokes tucked away in your favorite games. Our hunt takes us from the make-out room in Quake II to the landing strip inside Microsoft's RedWest Campus, home of MS Flight Simulator 98.

MAPS, MODS, MISSIONS, AND MORE

Weasel's Watch **By Willem Knibbe**

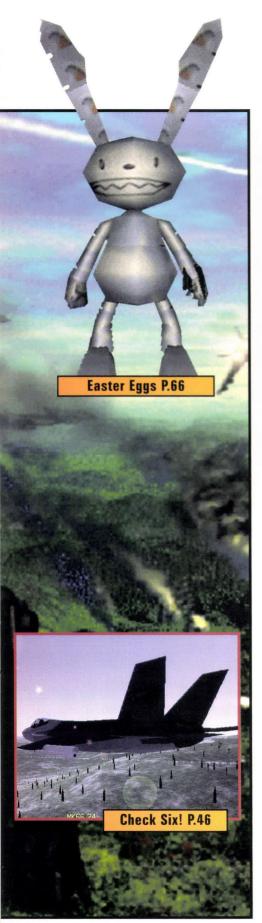
Every month The Weasel scrounges the Net for the best homegrown, game-related maps, mods, missions, tools, and tweaks. This month, it's Quake II Eraser bot making The Weasel go WooP!











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CONTESTS

71 THE PC GAMES GREATEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

Here's your chance to vote for the best games *ever*—and score a fancy feast of gaming goodies to boot. Lick those lips, send in the form, and win!

THE CORPORATE EMPIRE NEEDS YOU!

It's war. Now, more than ever, the Nataka Corporation needs you.

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The new high-speed combat adventure from Mad Genius Software.

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Fight corporate armies, cultists, and mysterious forces in the far future.

Reconfigure your Nataka Remotely Piloted Vehicle [RPV] on a mission-by-mission basis to suit your tactics and taste. Meet the enemy on your own terms. Not his.

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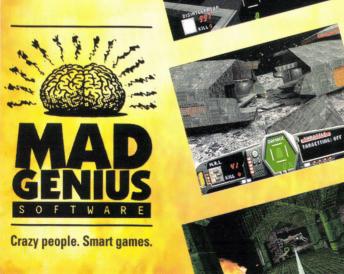
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EDITOR'S NOTE



STEVE KLETT

Total Sleepdeprivation II

few months back, The Player wrote a column about his experiences playing Total Annihilation, and at the end he asked readers about their favorite C&C clones. While Dark Reign received a strong show of support, Total Annihilation was the overwhelming winner.

It's one of the reasons *PC Games* traveled to Cavedog's offices to get the scoop on the next title in the TA franchise and some good dirt on TA2. The other reason is, well, we're still losing too much sleep because of this game—I can't speak for the rest of the staff, but the Arm is lobbing shells into my dreams at night. The Player's a lost cause: He was seven hours into Core Mission 7 when he wrote that column, a battle that took him 15 hours and 5,500 kills and 2,200 casualties to win (pathetic, we know). But he learned, and now he's cruising through the rest of the game. We're addicted, and we know it. We just had to find out what cool new stuff was headed TA's way.

So this month we bring you the first information on The Core Contingency, an add-on for TA planned for a late April release. With a new storyline, 12 missions per side, one über-mission, and 150 new units, CC is far more than your typical expansion pack—it's almost a whole new game. We also got the crew up at Cavedog to spill the beans on some of TA2's hot new features—check it out on page 58. But we knew that wasn't enough for all the hardcore TA faithful: So we got Cavedog to give us an exclusive unit—the Arm Panther tank—plus a multiplayer map—Evad River Delta. Both are a blast, and you can only get 'em on PC Games.exe or at www.pcgames.com!

Now what's this we hear about *PC Games* not covering flight sims? We've got a hangarful of reviews of the latest sims to land on shelves—not to mention a rundown of the hottest sims under construction for later this year—on page 46. Heck, we even included scores for all the sims we've reviewed over the last year, just so you know which ones to take for a spin. If you're a PC flight junkie, you'll want to read this.

This month we're also kicking off the voting for our Greatest Games of All Time feature, which will appear in our July/August issue. You, the gamer, will pick the winners, so fill out the ballot on page 72. Who knows—you might win something!

We've got a packed reviews section this month, but the post-holiday rush of super-hot titles is definitely over. However, that's not necessarily a bad thing, as games such as Worms 2 (a hit overseas but obscure to most gamers in the US) get more attention than they might have otherwise.

Finally, you remember all those cool first-person shooters we've had on our covers—SiN, Unreal, Daikatana—and you're wondering why you can't play 'em? Well, they've all slipped a bit; we've got a status update for ya on page 31. It ain't our fault, really!

As always, enjoy, and keep that feedback coming!

Stive Klett

Steve Klett Editor in Chief sklett@pcgames.com





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Microsoft





"This is the kind of game that can wreck a marriage.... Best Overall Game of 1997."—Gamezilla 1,3.98

"If you love the smell of burning arrows in the morning... Age of Empires is just what the general ordered."—Newsweek 11.10.97

"Utterly brilliant." - PC Zone 9.97

"This game is great. I can heartily recommend it to both turn-based and real-time strategy gamers..."

—Computer Gaming World 1.98

"*****

- CNET Gamecenter 10.28.97

"It's a game of nailbiting intensity and nonstop strategy."—OGR.COM 12.97



Age of Bronze

Age of Iron

Age of Opinions

"One of the best of the year in any genre."—The Atlanta Journal Constitution 11.9.97

"★★★★ ...a masterpiece."

Computer Games Strategy Plus 11.97

"One of the year's best games comes from Microsoft." – Jeff Green, San Francisco Chronicle 11.1.97

"...nothing is more frightening than a row of seven War Elephants..." —CNET Gamecenter 10.28.97

"The new king of real-time strategy games." —PC Gaming.com 11.97

www.microsoft.com/games/empires

INTERNET GAMING

ENSEMBLE

Game developed by Ensemble Studios Corp. for Microsoft Corporation.

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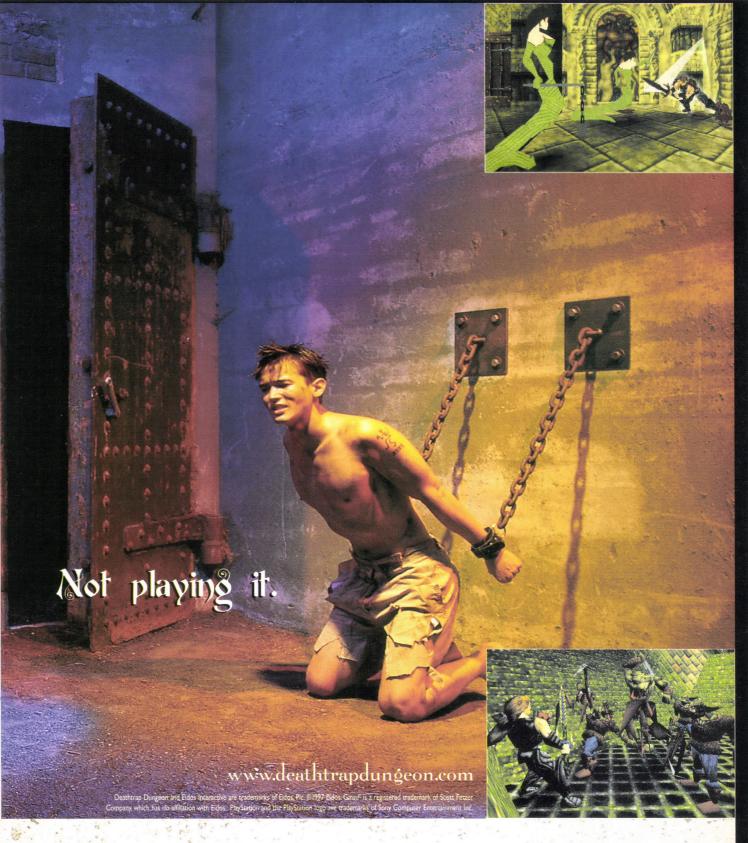






DEATHTRAP

Deat me. Whip me. Just don't hit that Quit button." Consider it your battle cry. Then bring on the skeletal warriors, zombies and countless other undead denizens. Each one is another chance to slice and dice like a Ginsu* knife gone bad. Or simply cast a spell



on the evil priestess who's done you wrong. Because in this cavernous maze of devious traps, it's all about cheating death at every turn, blurring that fine line between pleasure and pain. And just when you think you can't take it anymore, consider the alternative.







You've been warned.

GAMES.EXE





Demo of the Month:

Total Annihilation Evad River Delta Map and Panther Unit (Cavedog)

Also:

Age of Empires v. 1.0a Patch (Microsoft) Air Warrior III Online (Kesmai) Alien Earth (Playmates Interactive) Aliens Online (Fox Interactive) **Armor Command (Ripcord Games)** Battlecruiser 3000AD Manual Battlecruiser 3000AD v. 1.01D7C Patch Dreams to Reality (Cryo Interactive) Eastern Front v. 1.06 Patch (TalonSoft) EraserBot v. 0.4a Beta **Evolution (Discovery)** Fighter Ace (Microsoft) Frogger (Hasbro) GameSpy 3D v. 1.52 Hexen II v. 1.11 Patch (Activision) Jet Moto Patch (Sony Interactive) Lords of Magic v. 1.2 Patch (Sierra On-Line) Mech 2: Mercenaries v. 1.1 Patch (MicroProse) Myth: The Fallen Lords v. 1.1 Patch (Bungie) Pax Imperia v. 1.03 Patch (THO) Planet Quake Quake II Mod Pack ProPilot v. 1.1 Patch (Sierra On-Line) Sabre Ace (Virgin Interactive) Sanitarium (ASC Games)

Stratosphere (Ronin Entertainment)

Total Annihilation v. 1.21 Beta Patch (Cavedog)

Twisted Metal 2 Patch (Sony Interactive)

Total Annihilation (Cavedog)

WarBreeds (Red Orb)

MindSpring

Mplayer

HEAT

Getting Started

Win 95

Simply place the CD in your disc drive and the Autorun function will run the interface.

Win 3.1

Insert the CD in your disc drive. In Program Manager, select the File menu and then Run. In the command-line box, type d:\pcgames.exe (where "d" is the letter of your disc drive).

Important Tech-Help FAQ

- O: When I run the interface, I get a message that says "Can't find VB40016.dll" or some other "Can't find" file error.
- A: Just run the setup file by clicking on the Start button, Run, then type d:\setup.pif (where "d" is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
- Or During the setup routine, I get a message that says "Can't register file."
- A: In this case, you will get a dialog box asking to Abort, Retry, or Ignore the error. Click on Ignore. The setup routine will be executed successfully, and the interface will run without problems.
- O: This demo doesn't work.
- A: Read the notes accompanying each game in the description box-they'll cover most eventualities. Refer any game-

- specific tech-support questions to the game's publisher. Help is also usually posted on publishers' Web sites.
- 1 Should I reinstall DirectX when prompted by a game's install program?
- As a rule, no. Be aware that most current demos now use DirectX 5.0, which can be found in the root directory of the
- Q: I didn't get the CD-ROM with my magazine. How can Lobtain one?
- To upgrade your subscription from non-CD to include this feast of gaming greats, direct your inquiries to pcgames subs@pcgames.com.
- 1 tried all the above, and I'm still having problems.
- A: Direct CD tech-related questions to ctou@pcgames.com.

Here's where you'll find all the games on this issue's CD. Click on any of them to highlight the relevant information about a game

The easiest way to vote for the PC Games Greatest Game of All Time. Click here for a direct link to the ballot.



My thing is Speed.
8THRUST jets, 4 rudder jets:

My stone goes like a scalded cat

move in QUICK strike fast and BLOW before they know w ALL their FIREPOWER doesn't Mean jack

if they can't hit o



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Oh yeah, and about a dozen RAMMING Spikes. When my fortress ROCKS your world, you Il know it.

Firepower, FIREPOWER and MOREfirepower

This isn't a BRIDAL SHOWER it's WaR.

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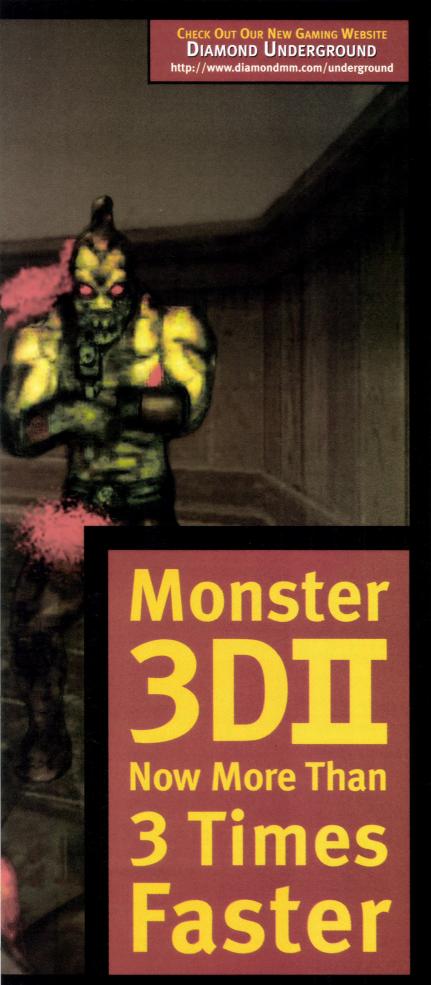
part STRATEGY. part FEAR

DESTROY MORE.

DISMEMBER MORE.

DISEMBOWEL MORE

Screenshots of Shadow Warrior™courtesy of 3D Realms® Entertainment.





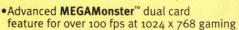
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- Special Edition Star Wars™ Game Pack from Lucas Arts™ which includes:
- from LucasArts™ which includes:
 -Shadows of the Empire Battle of Hoth™
 - -X-wing™ vs. Tie Fighter™ The Academy™
 - -Jedi Knight™: Dark Forces™II-Pathways to the Force™
- Heavy Gear™ by Activision™—Full Version
- •TombRaider II™ by Eidos Interactive™ Special Edition
- •Plus 3D Game Demos: Final Fantasy,[™] Daikatana,[™] Joint Strike Fighter[™] and Flight Unlimited[™]

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Don't adjust your monitor! That's still PC Games Online at www.pcgames.com, only we've got a new look and are now part of something bigger: Games.net—The IDG Games Network (games.net). Launched by PC World Online, this new mega–games site

is a one-stop service dedicated to all things games-related, delivering top content from PC Games Online, Tipworld, PC World's Online Games Channel, and THE WEB Magazine. All of the latest news, reviews, previews, demos, and tips—plus PC Games exclusives and community-driven features such as chats and live events—are now showcased in one easy-to-use interface. Come see us at our new home!

GOLDEN FIRE HYDRANT NOMINATIONS ARE IN— CAST YOUR VOTE!

Happy Puppy will be presenting its notorious Golden Fire Hydrant awards at E3 this year, with traditional categories like Best Real-Time Strategy Game, plus its own infamous game honors, including Best Use of Adult Themes and Most Obnoxious Ad Campaign. The nominations have been made by Happy Puppy users, and voting is now underway at happypuppy.com. Make your picks—you might even win a trip to the awards ceremony in Atlanta.



PLANET QUAKE IS HERE

That's right, Quake fans—Planet Quake has joined Games.net to keep you covered on all of those mods, skins, and other Quake-related items. You can also check out the Planet Quake Network's other sites, including Ritualistic.cc ,

Gamegirlz.com, and more. And don't forget to check this month's PC Games.exe for the Planet Quake Quake II mod pack: It's full of the hottest mods from the No. 1 Quake resource on the Net.

THE SOURCE

By now, we've launched our brand-new community channel, The Source. Inside our chat room, you'll be able to talk with other gamers, the Games.net staff, and even scheduled guests. And those of you eager for the newest gaming gossip can get it from James Fudge (aka Prophet) of Gamewire fame, who's now writing for us.

IT DOESN'T STOP THERE!

We've got cheats and walkthroughs for Tomb Raider II, Oddworld, and more, plus a look back at the Ultima series and how it's influenced today's games. Then there's inGaming, our new column exploring the goods and bads of the gaming industry. And don't forget the rest of our columns: The Sniper, our tribute to the ruthless world of playing to win; The Fan, covering sports gaming; and the insightful rants of The Grumpy Gamer. It's all at www.pcgames.com!

For Demos and Patches,
go to www.gamedemos.com.

DEMOS

AFL 98

Evolution

Pandemonium 2

Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

WarBreeds

DATOH-S

Civil War Generals 2 v. 1.02

F/A-18 Korea v. 1.0.1

Heavy Gear v. 1.1

I-War

Myth v. 1.1

Pod 3Dfx Force-Feedback

PREVIEWS

Deathtrap Dungeon

Falcon 4.0

Messiah

Quest for Glory V

Urban Assault

NEWS

Turn to our News section for the latest scoop on games, gamemakers, and other computer-game info. We update this section daily, so keep on comin'!

Having trouble beating that one mission or killing that one creature? Check out our cheats for some gaming legends—and for newer games, too, like Mass Destruction and Team 47 GoMan.





Conquer the galaxy through military action, diplomacy or covert operations. With *Star Wars Rebellion*, those are just a few of the ways to implement strategy and tactics on a grand scale – with control of the *Star Wars* galaxy as the prize. Command the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire. Engage in spectacular battles. Earn the loyalty (or resentment) of some 200 planets. Play in real-time, in single play mode or two player mode over a network, the Internet or direct connect. Is the Force with you? Discover for yourself.







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FALLEN LORDS

Welcome to Myth: The Fallen Lords, a three-dimensional world where broken swords and bent arrows litter the ground, and the blood of your

enemies lies in pools at your feet. A world of harsh rain and breathtaking landscapes, where rivers reflect the haggard faces of soldiers and hide the rotten corpses of the undead. A world you can expe-

rience from any point of view. Welcome to Myth: The Fallen Lords, a world where terrifying myths have become reality.

Check out the game that earned CGW's "CG Choice," PC Games' "A List," and Strat. Plus' "Stamp of Approval" at www.bungie.com or call 800 295-0060 to get yours now!

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Question of the Month: Who's That?

Yipes! Our giveaway guy's hijacked the QofM again, and that means goodies for one lucky reader! All you have to do is tell us who that character is to the left and what game he's from, and you'll be entered in a drawing for a free game and a *PC Games* T-shirt! (And we *know* this one's easy, so no hints...) Send in your entry (that's singular) by April 15 (1998!) to PC Games, Letters to the Editor, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404; email: pcgamesletters@pcgames.com. Please include your full name with each letter or contest entry.

[Editor's note: January's Mercenary column about gamemakers releasing premature products ("The Old Bait-and-Switch") was the hot topic in recent mail. As you might guess, most of it was overwhelmingly annoyed with the trend: many of you shared personal stories of poorly working products and endless calls to tech support. (A programmer for a well-known gamemaker even wrote to tell us that he posted our column in the company break room—only to have it angrily swiped by management.) There were, however, some dissenters...as you'll see here. Thanks to all who wrote.—Ed.]

The Big Steal?

I want to thank you for writing what I've been thinking for months. It's time the game sellers and computer makers got it together. I'm new to computers, and if I didn't find them interesting, I would've just quit trying. A game is supposed to *have* puzzles, not *be* one in getting it to work.

J.R. Burgett Via email

Just read your article and I certainly agree. It's not just the game marketers, though. I've had problems with Sound Blasters since they started, and the Creative "support" group has never—repeat, never—solved any of them. They either don't answer at all or answer a different question or refuse to answer because I have an OEM card or make excuses or just prevaricate.

Bryan Timms Via email

I agree: We need to start cracking down on software and hardware companies to get them to put out the product they keep telling us they are. First off, people need to know the legal authorities with whom they can file their fraud claims. Then, people who do complain should get online and leave their email addresses, so as to present a larger front for the authorities and companies to see. (Large numbers of people protesting all at once will get more attention.) Finally, we're going to have to convince people to take that soft- and hardware that isn't functioning as it should be back to the store and get something else. Hitting a company where it hurts is one sure-fire way to let it know that enough is enough.

Steve Anderson Via email

I read your latest column concerning gaming companies releasing a product that isn't ready for the market. Though I sympathize and agree that a game should be hassle-free, the reality is, it's hard to create such a product. You compared computer games with household appliances, but you can't. These appliances operate in a very controlled environment: that is, they perform a specific task when you turn them on. A refrigerator doesn't have to reprogram itself because you introduce a new food to be cooled, nor does a washing machine need to be reprogrammed because you bought a new pair of jeans. A computer, on the other hand, is in a very dynamic environment. There are many companies offering their own versions of a sound card, or a motherboard, or a video card, etc., which makes it tough to make one product that will be compatible with them all. It usually takes many people using the product to discover all the bugs and incompatibilities that are inherent in the game. I am in the pharmaceutical business. Although drug companies do extensive research on their drugs, they continue to find new indications

and new side effects. It's the nature of the beast. Likewise, computers are a vast medium that can never truly be conquered to perfection. Though I think we should expect a great product from the game companies, I also think it's realistic to expect at least one patch somewhere down the road.

Bobby Via email

Blade Scores

The Opponent's "Online Resolutions" (January '98) was the highlight of the new year! Do you have any more computer-geek pickup lines?

Rodney Armstrong Via email

Thanks, Rodney. Comments on the size of one's hard drive are always good. Be careful boasting about acceleration, however.—Blade

Wayward RPGs?

I have a gripe with the gaming industry. I'm an avid RPGer and I have been sorely dissatisfied with the quality of recent role-playing games. I feel that as technology has increased, the emphasis has shifted from the storyline and fun factor to "How much 3D, real-time, 65,000-color graphics can we fit in here?" I miss the depth and feeling of games like Knights of Legend, Might and Magic, or even Crusaders of the Dark Savant.

PC role-playing games have meshed with "adventure" games, and the results are disappointing to those looking for a strict RPG.

Jonathan Kinsley
Via email

We know what you mean, Jonathan: 1997 was discouraging for RPG fans. Bright spots

NCOMING

GameStorm, and thought it was an OK game-until I joined a team. Suddenly, it wasn't just about shooting each other in huge metal monsters-it was about strategy, working and practicing with someone else so you could anticipate each other's moves. Now I play team games like Air Warrior and Aliens Online: it's a lot of fun fighting with friends at your back against other teams or Aliens. We write 100page manuals and short stories. It's the community that makes the game for me now, not just action and killing. Nick Galarneau Via email

After all the times I've been betrayed and cut down by my "allies," I couldn't care less about teamplay.

Jason Bell
Roscommon, MI

Teamplay is for wimps: It allows newbies and bad players to have some protection against better odds, and there's no feeling of satisfaction after smashing the enemy to a pulp. Give me a good, bloody deathmatch any day. Ingrid Catlin Vienna, VA

I've played co-op C&C and Warcraft II against the computer and I think it's more fun this way—and it can be more challenging if you increase the number of computer opponents. Camaraderie is a very good feeling, especially when you win. As far as teamplay over the Net with strangers, I'm not really interested. When I play Quake, I'd rather pretend the guy I'm shooting is the jerk who cut me off in traffic.

Chris Bantz Via email

Cooperative Play?

Unlike the selfish sters, there are plenty of you

PC Gamesters, there are plenty of you out there who love cooperative play—and you let us know it! Of the heaps of responses we got to January's Question of the Month ("Teamplay?"), about two-thirds of you were fans of both teamplay and deathmatching, arguing that each had its place. (Congratulations go to Jan Sterniczuk, this month's prize-winner.) We also heard from co-op diehards who thought pairing against Al was the only way to go—and from lone wolves who savored a solo victory. Here's some of the mail:

How can one man take out an entire army in Quake? You need a team to beat a team. Teamplay adds strategy, fun, and purpose to a game. We need more games like Uprising, Space Hulk 2, and Terra Nova—team games.

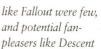
Shane Killen

I've played games where you run around and kill each other, and found them fun for about 10 minutes. Then I tried Multiplayer BattleTech: Solaris on

Parkland, FL

OTHER GAMES YOU LIKE TO PLAY COOPERATIVELY:

- •CTF and Team Fortress Quake mods (mentioned most often)
- Diablo
- Star Command: Revolution
- Starfleet Academy
- Tanarus
- Ultima Online



to Undermountain were hugely disappointing. But fear not: there's hope in 1998. On top of the online RPGs Everquest (Sony) and Asheron's Call (Microsoft), 1998 should also bring bounty in the form of Might and Magic VI, Wizardry VIII, Ultima IX, and Return to Krondor. The avid RPGer might just have a great year.

—Ed.

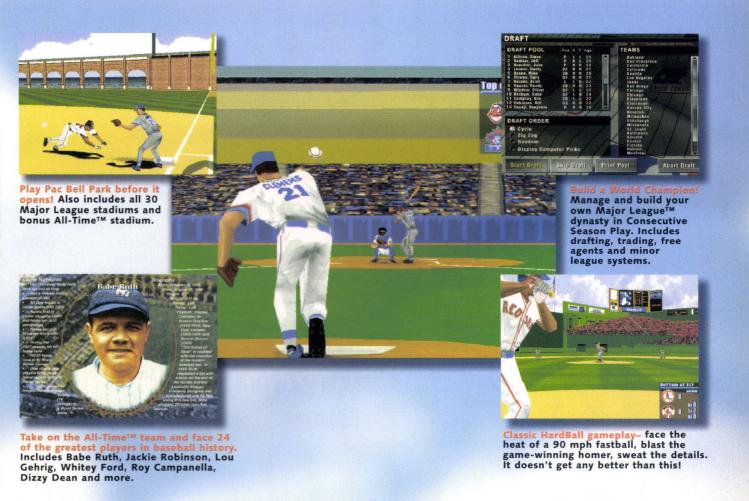
Whoops

The cows are crying and the stars are falling... or something like that. Anyway, we made a couple of goofs in recent issues: In March's "How Much Pentium Can You Afford?" story, the street prices of both Falcon Northwest computers included monitors; this wasn't the case with the other systems mentioned. The street prices for the Falcon P233 should have been \$1,895, and the Falcon Pentium II \$6,500. That substantial difference raises the P233's rating from a B- to an A. Also, in January's GameWire, the "More Star Wars Toys" blurb should have said "Galoob will end up paying \$140 million [not \$140] in royalties plus 20 percent of its stock for the privilege" of producing SW action figures. Finally, in Feb.'s Worthy Game URLs, the correct address for Alchemist's AOE Underground should have been www.dark-son.com/aoe/. We apologize for the errors.

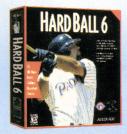




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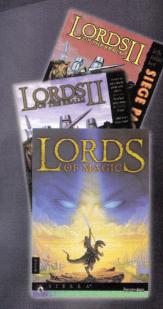
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Slippery Shooters

By George T. Chronis and Steve Klett

ers of *PC Games* last year. Of the class of '97, only two of them have shipped: Shadow Warrior and Jedi Knight. What about the other three? We profiled Unreal in our May/June issue, Daikatana in our September issue, and SiN in our November issue; all three have slipped their schedules. Slipped severely, in the cases of Unreal and Daikatana. Here's an update on how they're coming along.

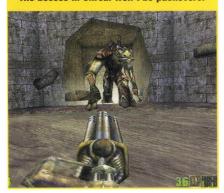
Unreal

Epic MegaGames' Unreal was billed as perhaps the first true Quake-killer by many—including us—when it was first shown behind closed doors two years ago. Well, that was when we were told it would ship last July or August...as we all know, that didn't happen. It's now on track to ship "by the middle of ['98]." The result: id got to ship the first true Quake-killer—Quake II.

Unreal's delays have been disappointing, to say the least—leading many to dismiss the game as vaporware. However, Unreal is indeed real, and your disappointment will likely fade in a hurry when you finally do get your hands on it.

PC Games got to play the game as we were finishing this issue, and we were duly impressed. All of Epic's talk about how cool the monster

The bosses in Unreal won't be pushovers.



animations are and how advanced their AI would be appears to be panning out. If you run and hide, monsters can and will track you down over the course of a level. They'll follow you up stairs and around corners and use lifts where appropriate. All the while, their movements

appropriate. All the while, their moveme are silky smooth and utterly lifelike.

This is vital to Unreal's gameplay, as it's designed to feel more like a level-based deathmatch than an out-and-out slugfest like Quake II or Duke. Most of the time, you'll be taking on only one or two baddies at a time—which is good, cuz these guys are tough.

As the screens attest, the lighting effects, textures, and level design still hold their own and then some after the release of Quake II. And Unreal will ship with a map editor, multiplayer maps, team-play options, and bots for simulating deathmatches. This one could very well be worth the wait. For more screens, go to

www.pcgames.com.

Daikatana

Back in our September issue, we were told John Romero's new bestest game was set for a December release. We assumed this meant December 1997, but Daikatana's development process may stretch past September and dangerously close to December 1998. Why? According to Romero, getting his team up to speed took longer than expected.

"The biggest hurdle, believe it or not, has been getting all parts of this large team working well together and ending up with the right people in the right places," he says. "Remember, we started working on this game last April and still didn't have a final, solid team

GAMEWIRE

Unreal's Skaari are lightning-

quick, deadly adversaries.

until a few months ago. Growing a company from zero to 90 employees within a year is tricky business. When everyone on the team is in sync and 'gets it,' things really start to roll—that's happening now."

Another major factor is that Romero decided midstream to ditch the Quake engine in favor of

the new and improved Quake II code. That entailed reengineering the team's original modifications to fit them into the Quake II specifications.

Daikatana's hero is com-

ing closer to reality...

Other features that have been getting retooled include the creature models, character skins, map textures, and colored-lighting effects. As you can tell from the latest character renderings shown here, Daikatana is indeed looking like a real game.

"The game is really beginning to get to a point where we can all see it coming together and what it will be like when it's complete," he says. "We're still a ways off, but it will be worth the wait."

...as is his lusty lady.

SiN

Compared to its two stablemates in this report, SiN has slipped the least. True, this Quakebased action game with a first-rate story was

continued on page 32



Slippery Shooters

supposed to be on store shelves by February. but the hard chargers at Ritual swear they'll make it by May.

"I have hotel reservations and tickets for Jazz Fest in New Orleans this May, and I don't intend to miss it," says Ritual vice president and art director Michael Hadwin.

Hadwin says Ritual decided to delay the release of SiN because the team wanted to make sure all its innovative elements worked correctly. As detailed in the SiN feature in our



The mutant guy in the Speedos works for SinTech.

November '97 issue, Ritual took the Quake engine, then built an entirely new layer of engine code on top of id's original to add substantially better interactivity and AIand to ditch Quake C as a programming tool. Getting all that infrastructure to work has taken longer than expected.

"At this late stage, we've been trying to come together to hammer out all the independent components we've designed so that we can reliably load the game and play," Hadwin says.

Since PC Games last spoke with Ritual, the team has added several new weapons, including a large number of "prototype" weaponsspecial designs that are unique to certain missions and levels in the single-player game. These Easter-egg weapons hidden on maps are oneoff designs under development by researchers employed by SinTech, the firm owned by the game's villain, Elexis. Hadwin says one of the new prototype guns is an energy weapon that splits targets into four. The design team has also had some disagreements on balancing existing weapons.

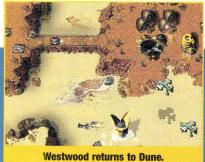


"We had a problem with the rocket launcher," Hadwin says. "Some team members wanted it to be an invincible God weapon. Others wanted to tone it down for game balance. It took awhile to resolve that." (He wouldn't say which way it went.)

Another reason SiN's late is that a small group of team members have split off to work on SiN 2. Hadwin says a lot of the work involves expanding upon the cinematic ending of SiN and developing a new storyline.

"We don't want SiN 2 to be too much of a transition from SiN, but we do want it to be different," he says.

As for whether SiN 2 will use the Quake II engine or some new Ritual über-tech engine, Hadwin says they haven't decided. "An incentive to do it on our own are those big, big fees you have to pay to id," he says. "It's a trade-off."



Considered an update by Westwood, Dune 2000 features new high-resolution graphics and a C&C interface; early screenshots betray a strong resemblance to Red Alert. Familiar units such as Deviators, Sonic Tanks, Ornithopters, Fremen warriors and Sardaukar troops return and will be augmented by new units. Players can choose to battle as the Atreides, the Ordos, or the Harkonnen factions. Naturally, sand worms roam wild to attack all combatants. LAN and Internet multiplay are supported. Expect Dune 2000 sometime this spring.

COVERT OPS

Esoteria Finds Home

Some of you may remember Mobeus' Esoteria 3, which was making the rounds a year ago. The game has resurfaced at Japanese toy company Bandai, sans the 3, and is being tailored to lead off a new game-publishing initiative. Upon playing an early copy of Esoteria, our first impression was that it wants to be a better

MDK, giving you a similarly stealthy-looking fellow named Raven to putter around with in chase view. Esoteria features 16-person multiplayer cooperative and DM options (Internet and LAN), something that MDK sorely lacked. Mobeus is

designing massive worlds that don't rely

on levels, so if your character can see

something in the distance, that location is already loaded and you can go there. Al is dynamic, not static, so computer adversaries will react to player strategy, not preassigned routes. Another plus is that the multiplayer server is asynchronous, allowing game connections at any time during the match. A selection of beam, cannon, and missile weapons are provided.

> Mobeus claims Esoteria is 85 percent done, and we might see a release as early as May.

Red Alert on Spice

Since Westwood is credited with launching the real-time strategy fad with the original Dune 2, it makes sense that

those Las Vegas denizens would return to the fold again—this time with Dune 2000.

Esoteria: MDK with

a view.





At the Wire



Quake II Expands

By the time you read this, Activision may be shipping the Quake II Mission Pack: The Reckoning. Xatrix, the same folks who brought us the wonderful Redneck Rampage, was tapped to do the design work. The most important feature of The Reckoning is the addition of 15 dedicated deathmatch levels. There are even four-player cooperative multiplayer missions against new mutant adversaries. New weapons include a plasma accelerator, which sounds like a pulsing BFG; an energy trap that turns targets into a health power-up; and a particle shotgun. The single-player levels will retain Quake II's linked-mission framework. id itself is working on a second expansion pack.

nVIDIA Goes Platinum

As you know from reading *PC Games*, the STB Velocity, Diamond Viper, and Canopus Total 128V are excellent 2D/3D video cards. All three use the same RIVA 128 chipset from nVIDIA. The cards have been so well received that nVIDIA has sold card makers more than 1 million of the chipsets in just four months.

Super Mario with Hot Sauce

Imagine a first-person Super Mario 64 with a Tomb Raider flair. That's what Utopia has in mind for Montezuma's Return. The sequel to the classic mid-'80s action/adventure Montezuma's Revenge should hit the streets in early May. The game features 3D graphics and full freedom of motion using Utopia's proprietary 3D engine. Its story revolves around Max Montezuma, a modern adventurer looking for the lost treasure of his legendary Aztec namesake. Gameplay is console-style with an emphasis on jumping, puzzle-solving, and obstacle maneuvering. Get the SVGA and 3Dfx demo at www.utopiatech.com.

g.o.d. Finds Followers

Mike Wilson's new developer-friendly co-op publishing company Gathering of Developers has signed up its first set of acolytes. Jumping in as equity partners are 3D Realms, Epic MegaGames, PopTop, Ritual, and Terminal Velocity. The signings resulted in a swift announcement from GT Interactive, affirming that GT has long-term publishing rights to 3D Realms' Duke Nuke Forever and Prey: A Talon Brave Game. g.o.d. was quick to confirm that submissions from its new partners would commence after other contractual agreements are met.



In the future, Terminal Reality will be pitting with q.o.d.

COVERT OPS CONT.

East Germans Invade

Urban Assault is the product of Terra Tools, a bunch of guys in the former East Germany who have banded together to create this genre-busting game. Like Activision's Battlezone, UA is part real-time

strategy game, part firstperson action game. Due this summer under a publishing agreement with Microsoft, UA adheres to the cyberpunk credo that you can't have a hero unless his intelligence has been mated with a machine.

As such, players go out to prevent a warravaged Earth from being blown apart by human militias and alien scum.

Managing the war up close

in Urban Assault.

You can choose to play from the perspective of two alien races and four former NATO allies. Sitting in a control station, you can build and direct units as required and then jump into any of their ground or air vehicles in battle. Any unit

you command will be more effective in battle. If the unit is lost, you return to your station. As long as there's enough available energy production, you can create units. Special technology to build more effective units can be taken in battle. The object is to clear one sector and then

move on to the next through a jump gate. At the very least, UA is memorable for its striking 3D-accelerated textures. We'll see if the gameplay lives up to the look.

Stone Age Real-Time

Virgin Interac-



Me Og, you dead.

tive's prepping Dawn of War, a C&C clone set in the Stone Age. That's right: this May, you'll be pointing and clicking little cave dudes and dudettes around as they deal with hostile tribes and hungry dinos. The game features "deformable" 3D terrain and some cool special effects for momentous events such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. You can play as one of three groups: Cro-Magnons, Neanderthals, and Saurians—each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

TOYS

Hot Wheels

Everyone has been waiting to try out a force-feedback steering wheel, and now there's one from SC&T called the Ultimate Per4mer. The \$229 unit makes full use of Immersion's latest I-Force drivers, includes an optical dead-man sensor that centers the wheel, and comes with 15 programmable buttons and rubberized grips. SC&T is also hawking something called pulsewidth modulation, which supposedly maximizes force feedback. We hope the "performance" ball bearings can take the shaking in upcoming racing games that support force feedback.



More Voodoo II

Righteous 3D is about to make its secondgeneration Voodoo II debut with the introduction of the Righteous 3D II. Orchid will begin production of the "sequel" at the end of the first quarter, which means you'll be able to buy it by summer. The price has not been set. The Righteous 3D II will incorporate 3Dfx's Voodoo II technology and will be compatible with all existing 3Dfx software titles. On the technical side, the R3DII will have a total of 8MB of EDO memory and two texture-memory units for beefed-up performance, instead of the Voodoo I's one unit. Of the total on-board memory, 4MB will be devoted to texture memory, which makes for smoother transitions between consecutive screen redraws. The other 4MB will be used for frame-buffer memory, which enables higher resolution and improved image quality. Additional improvements include advanced anti-aliasing, trilinear filtering, and alpha blending, along with multitextured special effects.



Optiquest's First 21-Inch

The Optiquest line of monitors has traditionally offered quality at decent prices. The division's first 21-inch monitor, the V115T, is now

hitting the streets at \$1,299. The unit is a vertically flat design that's touted to reduce distortion and has refresh rates of up to 89Hz at 1280-by-1200 resolution.

New Monster Sounds

Diamond isn't waiting for Creative to catch up in the 3D, PCI sound-card wars. Following up the already well-received Monster Sound board are two new cards in the family, the \$99 M80 and the \$149 MX200. Unlike the add-on original, both of the new cards are specifically stand-alone units. The M80 features support for Aureal's A3D format and 32-voice hardware wavetable synthesis. The MX200 adds 64-voice hardware wavetable synthesis for the more acoustically minded, plus support for four-speaker 3D audio. Both include Midisoft's audio and Internet tools and are available now.

\$1,499 Pentium II

Those Pentium II prices keep on dropping. Acer has just shipped two new low-cost units. The \$1,499 2853 system is a Pentium II 266 that's outfitted with 32MB of RAM, a 4.3GB hard drive, a 32x CD-ROM drive, a 2MB AGP ATI Rage 3D Pro video card, and a 56K modem. The \$1,799 2861 Pentium II 300 ups the hard drive to 6.4GB and the ATI video-card RAM to 4MB.



Pentium II Speeds Up, Again

Don't shoot the reporter. It's true: Pentium II speeds are being kicked up again by Intel. By the time you read this, 333MHz Pentium IIs should be in circulation. Intel is using a new production process that reduces chip size and the heat a CPU creates. The process makes it possible for Intel to make Pentium IIs with speeds up to 450MHz. We expect those puppies will arrive sooner rather than later.

Nintendo Name-Dropping

A few months ago, Laral released a Nintendo-branded joystick for PCs that was pretty good. The company is again slapping the Nin-

tendo label on a PC peripheral, the NHP-W60 infrared wireless headphone. Hey, even PC Games editors get chided by angry neighbors for playing games loudly at 3 a.m. Unlike radio frequencies used by cordless phones, infrared signals are not susceptible to interference. This \$55 infrared headphone is intended to work within 25 feet of a PC, eliminating noise and cable pollution at the same time.

AC Networking

Gamers wishing they could be networked to the guy next door or to their siblings in the next room have a new option, the \$99 Passport by Intelogis. The unit is about the size of an AC lamp timer and plugs into an AC wall socket and through your PC's parallel port. Plug a second Passport into another socket in the house, and the AC wiring can be used as a network conduit. Intelogis claims ping rates of 100 milliseconds or less using the system. Interestingly enough, the Passport will reach out across to every home on the same electric-company transformer in the neighborhood within a one-mile radius. For anyone not wanting outside connections, a software lock-out is provided.

-George T. Chronis and Joe McCloud

Site of the Month

Indigo's Myth Page

et's say you bought Myth: The Fallen Lords, and your dog ate your guidebook. All is not lost! This is one of the most comprehensive Myth sites around, with sections like Strategy Guide, Walkthroughs, Etiquette, Orders of Myth, and more. This little puppy has it all. Nicely done!





Does your gaming Web site dominate? Send your URLs to sites@pcgames. com, and you just might see the fruits of your labor bookmarked in an upcoming issue!

Did you stay up until 2 a.m. buffing up your game site again? If you did, it deserves some attention! We've gone online to pick out the very best in gamers' URLs—the few that stand out among the rest. Here are some of our favorite in-your-face, slammin' Web sites!

FizzBan's Keep

www.scott.net/~sragan/dungeon Dungeon Keeper fans, FizzBan's got it all: chat, hack files, character info, and more.



Ynrohkeeg's Star Trek **Gaming Central**

www.keeg.com/starfleet/index.html Captain! The site's too big! She can't take much more! Starfleet Academy, Secret of Vulcan Fury—if it's Trek, it's here.

Myth Madness

www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Castle/2796 Another good site on Myth: The Fallen Lords.



The Sentinel

quake2.stomped.com Quake II news, screenshots, files, links, and a big fat weapons list.

Introspection Wing **Commander Home Sector**

introspect.wa.net/wchs/

The Wing Commander world is bigger than your backyard. Come check it out.



JediKnight.net

www.jediknight.net Get your daily dose of Jedi with up-to-date news on battles, new sites, and more.

Jedi Knights of the **Round Table**

www.newlifesvs.com/KRT/ Check out this JK clan-highly organized and properly motivated to rule the universe.

Poop's Diablo II Page

www.forsite.net/diablo2

The name doesn't reflect the quality of this

site. It's got quests, spells, descriptions, and the latest rumors on this upcoming RPG.



Online-Gaming Services

MPG-NET www.mpgn.com ENGAGE www.gamesonline.com

TEN www.ten.net

Internet Gaming Zone www.zone.com Kali www.kali.com GameStorm www.gamestorm.com

DWANGO www.dwango.com

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Kahn www.stargatenetworks.com

Battle.net www.battle.net

Bungie.net www.bungie.net

REMEMBER HOW THEY SAID:

TECHNOLOGY WOULD TAKE WARFARE

OUT OF THE TREMCHES?



THEY WERE WRONG.









TERRA·UICIU5



THE PLAYER



This month, you tell us what you think about some of the latest games...and The Player responds.

STEVE KLETT

To Be a Game Reviewer, Part II

he Player got so many responses to PC Games' request for reader-submitted reviews that he's decided to dedicate this month's column to them. He got so many, in fact, that the

column's being expanded to a second page for the first time ever. (Strange... The Ed.'s never let me write two pages of my verbiage...)

In our February issue, The Player outlined the basic steps that brought him to his current lofty status as a professional game-reviewer. He even offered advice for those readers who wanted to get work reviewing games. AND he offered them a chance to shine in the pages of PC Games.

While he commends readers for their enthusiasm and energy in submitting reviews, he will nevertheless note where they failed to listen to him...and, of course, where they did. (Reviews edited for brevity and your sanity.)

Myth: The Fallen Lords

By Rodney Tsing nce in awhile, a game is released into the market that contains all the aspects of a great game, but falls short in many categories and turns out to become a total failure. Sometimes, though, a game is released with all these aspects and completely excels in all categories. A perfect example of a game like this is Myth.

Myth has all the ingredients of a classic—simple yet compelling storyline, jaw-dropping 3D graphics, excellent and addictive gameplay—to create an experience few games could match. Multiplay is excellent, with free access to Bungie.net, Bungie's free gaming service. You can easily find other gamers to play with, and there is even a real-time ranking system, represented by caste icons next to each player's name. Toss in a 3Dfx card (though the graphics are already impressive without one), and you have yourself one of the greatest games of the year.

Myth is a game in the real-time strategy genre, but don't expect just another C&C clone. The building of structures and collection of resources are entirely omitted in this game, concentrating more on strategy and tactics to keep you alive in the midst of battle. In each level, you start out with an assigned number of units, and those are the only units you have to use in that level, unless you find others to join you. Types of units range from the common foot-soldiers, archers, and dwarves to the Conan-type Berserks and towering Forest Giants, who inflict large amounts of pain on anything that dares to challenge them...

The true 3D physics model makes the game unbelievably realistic. Arrows are gracefully through the air, body parts litter the battleground, and blood is released by the truckload. Terrain is also very

> important during battle: a group of archers standing on a hill shooting arrows can do much more damage than if they're at the bottom of the hill shooting upwards.

Weather conditions affect battle, too: units travel slower during a snowstorm and leave footprints for enemies to follow, and the Dwarves' explosives are useless while it's raining. These all combine to form a heavenly gaming experience....

Myth is a tough game to master, but you'll want to master it-not walk away from it because of its high difficulty level. All in all, it's one of the best games I've played in a long time.

GAMEPLAY: 🔼 GETTING STARTED: A-GRAPHICS: A SOUND CHECK: A-MULTIPLAYER: B+

The Player: Excellent job, very few typos or punctuation errors, comprehensive review noting many gameplay elements, and he got the scoring system right—Bravo! Rodney gets a game and a PC Games T-shirt.

Quake II

By David Vigneaux

hen I got my greedy little hands on a box with a huge double-crossed Q on the front and "Quake II" printed on top, adrenaline started rushing through my body, and I hadn't even tried it

out yet. I rushed to the computer to try it, where I knew I would be overwhelmed...

I have a Vérité card, so I downloaded the patch to accelerate the game. I don't know about the 3Dfx version, but I run at 512-by-384 accelerated at 30 fps, and it looks FAN-TAS-TIC.

Then, I got to try out the game, and because I heard that the BFG was back, I decided to give myself all the weapons [The Player: Should note cheat here: Give All] and take them for a spin. The weapons in this game are much better than in Quake, including more animations and switching in-between weapons. The bad guys look much cooler,

but the AI in this game is nothing to brag about: the Reaper-bots in Ouake were much smarter than these guys. Do not let them fool you by ducking your shots—they are pretty

> still lacks. I decided to try out the multiplay—the whole point of the game was to play it online, so I did. At deathmatch, this game kicks Quake's ass. I did, however, notice that many people are

stupid, and think that by ducking you cannot hit them, but aiming down is rather easy.

stupid. The single-player game, although better than Quake,

Overall, I think that id Software released a game that was not quite finished, and there will be more patches to come. The single-player is okay, but the only reason I got the game was multiplayer, and I am very satisfied with the multiplayability of this game.

Look for me on QII servers—I'm "Vigneaux."

The Player: Some nice observations—particularly the tendency for players to crouch all the time and the monster AI—but where the heck are the grades? D'oh! Remember what The Player said about studying a mag's review format and style before submitting a review? Try again...

Wing Commander: Prophecy

By Adam Steele have craved three games this year: Jedi Knight, Total Annihilation, and Wing Commander: Prophecy. All of these are top-notch A games in the extreme, but only one had me salivating when I first saw it advertised. As you may have guessed (and if you haven't, tap your head once or twice), it's Wing Commander: Prophecy. The graphics are great (especially with Voodoo), the sound top-notch, the music excellent and well-suited to the game, and the gameplay, to say the least, exquisite.

This game is great, and even the story was strong, proving to the world that just because Chris Roberts left Origin doesn't mean there will never be another great Wing Commander space saga...

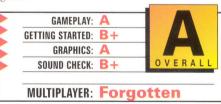
You can really get involved in this game and really think you're flying. I found the sights and sounds of battle a rather impressive culmination of explosions and laser blasts. The impressive array of controls and settings on systems is kind of enjoyable. Say you're going to torpedo a cruiser, and there is no fighter support. You can adjust your shields to full front and then full back on your retreat. Or if you're in a serious firefight with in-close enemies, you can adjust your power settings to up the gun- and shield-recharge rates. This gives you the ability to customize survival and firepower any way you want...

I thought the acting in the cut-scenes was pretty good, and the special effects were fantastic, but you'll notice one thing missing: You can't choose any of your lines à la Wing III or Privateer 2: The Darkening. This kind of sucked [The Player: Tell us how you really feel...], but it isn't an extremely huge issue with playing a game...

If I had any major problems, it was the lack of promised multiplay, probably the worst thing Origin could've done to a game—false advertising. This really came as a blow to all those who wanted multiplayer Wing Commander. Oh well, they say they're making a multiplayer pack to be released later, or maybe even a whole other product in itself.

Well, in closing remarks, I'd like to say: Origin, keep up the good work, but please, we're all begging, don't advertise features you don't intend to implement, and put some damn immersing frills into the documentation—such as stats on planes, and maybe some pictures of different craft in the game.

The Player: Adam gets points for his raw enthusiasm and nicely presented document, which



was the only one to include screens. The original review suffered from a lack of organization, but hey—it was about three times longer than what's included here, so he gets an "A" for effort.

What do you think: Should reader reviews be a regular section in PC Games? Let us know at ThePlayer@pcgames.com. And keep those reviews coming, BUT KEEP THEM UNDER 300 WORDS!

THE OPPONENT

M T W T F
1 2 3 6 7 8 9 10
13 14 15 16 17
20 21 22 23 24
27 28 29 30

LADE

Nudie beauties stalk the Net—and they look curiously familiar.

People Are Strange

loody strange. People are really, really odd. And really, really scary. And when presented with a freeform platform like the Net on which to exhibit their wares, they do some strange stuff.

It's one of the beauties of the Internet that an innocent search for gaming information can lead, via a few random link clicks, to some crazy sites. Information jaunts lead you through the surreal by way of the grotesque after a left turn at the preposterous. Not surprisingly, they often end at the pornographic.

Back in January, The Opponent offered his online resolutions—those elements of life in the online world that he'd try to curb, avoid, or enjoy more of in the coming year. One of the most notable involved one Ms. Lara Croft and the supposed cheat to render her, well, butt-naked.

"There is no cheat," I pronounced. "Oh yes there is!" came the response. Well, there isn't an actual in-game cheat as such, but due to the rather clever work of amateur hacks, Nude Raider is very much a reality.

So with a little ingenious (illegal?) patch play, you can watch Lara romp around the Tibetan wilderness dressed as nature intended (but Core Design probably didn't—and no, I won't send it to anybody). It's a measure of the inventiveness and talent among these programmers that not only does the patch come with a neat Windows 95 install interface, but it's also 3Dfx-compatible. Just as id, Epic, and Valve hired Quake C coders, I reckon Black Dragon Productions (maker of Riana Rouge) should invest in the talents of that particular programmer.

My Web-browse to confirm the validity of the Nude Raider–patch claims uncovered more, ahem, down-market attitudes of many gamers. So be it Tifa or Aeris from the Final Fantasy games, Princess Zelda, or Kitana from Mortal Kombat, sites do exist where artists have rendered their favorites in various states of undress committing various lewd acts. You think I'm kidding? I'm not.

Not Naked, but Shocked

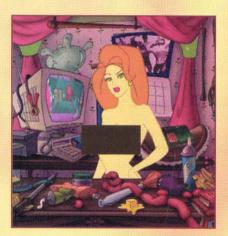
Other talented people are working their entertaining magic with Shockwave plug-in games. Who could refuse the chance to Slap a Spice Girl



as presented at www.urban75.com/Punch/spice belt.html. Using the "Whack-a-Mole" concept from arcades, each Spice pops her head up through a hole to be met by your swift mouse-controlled hand. Slap! Point scored. Thrown into the mix are bonuses for hitting Prime Spice, Margaret Thatcher.

Should you associate an interest in the noble art of boxing with a loathing for a range of celebs from Dennis Rodman to Bill Gates to even Mr. Prez himself, take a look at the celebrity slugfest at slugfest.kaizen.net/. It's amazing what you can do with Shockwave, a little creativity, and a serious dislike of a number of well-known people.

But you think that amateur hackers and game geeks are bad? What about the pros? They've been known to throw plenty of oddities into their creations. A well-known Easter egg is the one that removes the obscuring branches and other embarrassment-avoiding scenery maintaining the dignity of characters aboard Leisure Suit Larry's PMS Bouncy. Be



it the gay pride issue in Maxis' SimCopter (fully detailed in this month's entertaining look at game Easter eggs) or rumors of a nude Slave Leia secret in Jedi Knight, there's plenty to dig up if you know where to look.

When gamers are given freedom of expression via the increasingly intuitive editing tools supplied

with many games, some crazy add-ons are likely to appear. Time will tell what the TA editing suite delivers and the Quake II source code maulers will concoct (there are already some pretty risqué skins). While The Opponent has stumbled across a bunch of these in his online wanderings [Now we finally know what Blade does all day—time to cut off his ISP.—Ed.], he gets the impression that he's barely scratched the surface. So if you happen to know of—or even run—a suitably offbeat, bizarre, or morally questionable game-related site, he'd like to hear from you. Because he's a little bit odd like that.

Examples of gamer perversion should be sent to blade@pcgames.com. To be used for academic purposes only.

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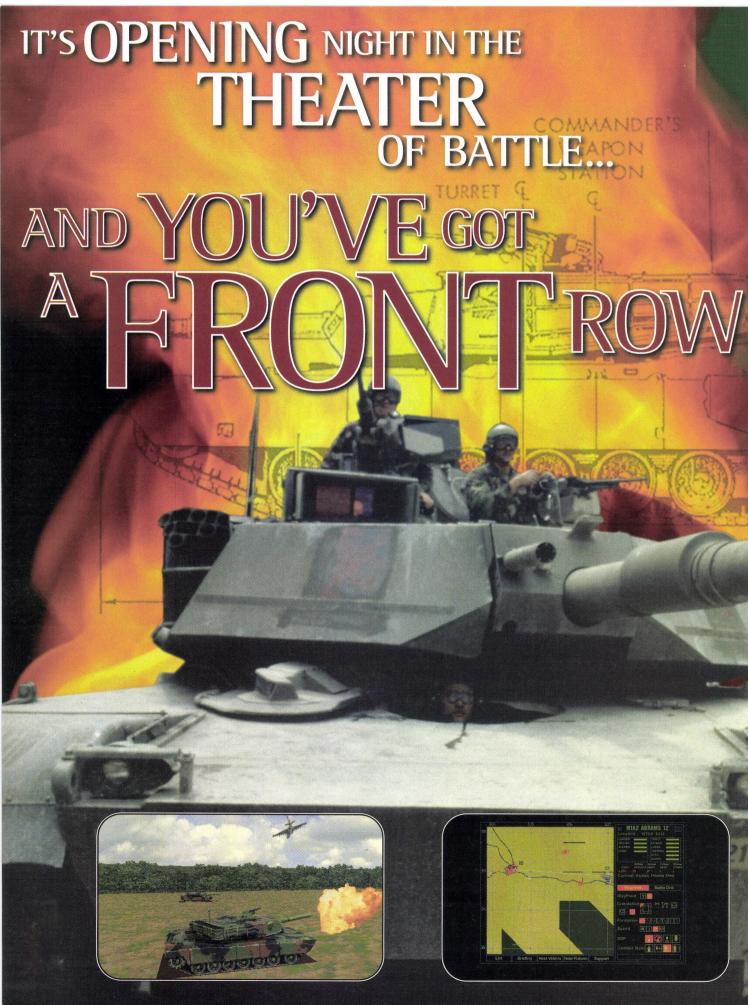
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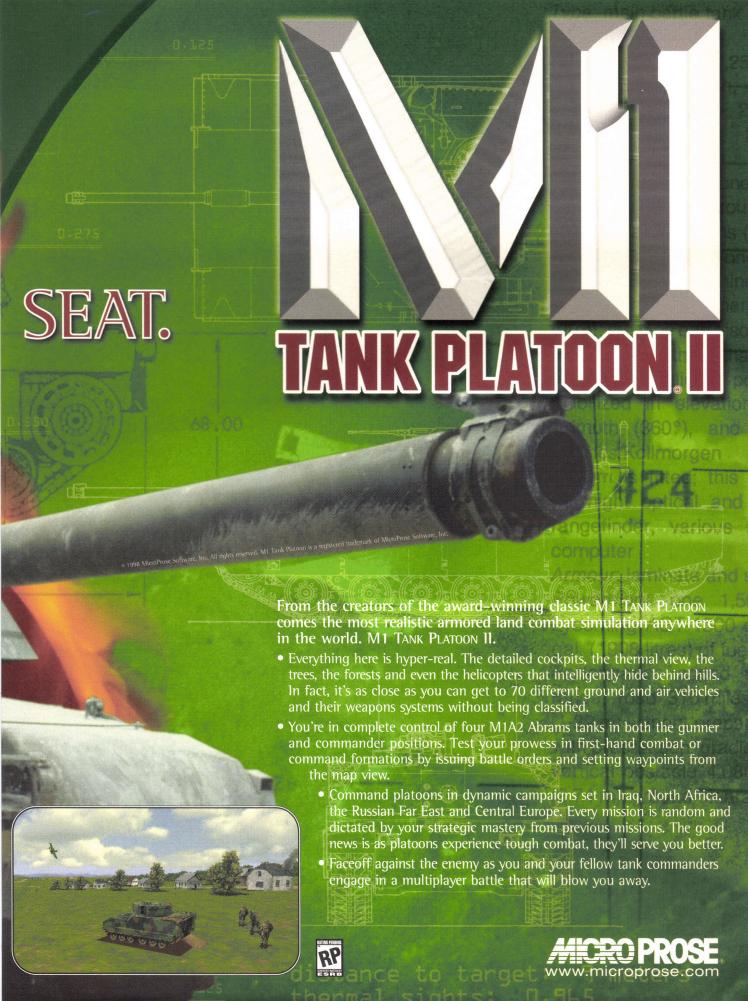
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If you thought last year was good for flight sims, just wait 'til you see what's targeting your tail in '98



MiG Allev

t's never been better for flight-sim fans. Long the domain of just I-Magic and MicroProse, the genre finally appears to have come into its own—1997 was the most prolific year in the history of flight simulations. All told, almost two dozen of them shipped.

There are now quality offerings in each flight-sim niche, so whether it's flying Cessnas or 747s, Fokkers or F-22s that makes you start reaching for your joystick, you'll have something to take to the skies. Top-notch companies are pouring resources and money into their offerings to make them faster, prettier, and more realistic. Force feedback, Internet play, and 3D-accelerator support are in, as every screenshot in this story shows.

While 1997 was a banner year, several of the more eagerly awaited titles were delayed or indefinitely postponed. As a result, 1998 may eclipse last year, not only in terms of quantity of titles produced,

but in sheer scope as well. Here's a sneak peek at what you can expect to see in the months ahead (the dates are estimates provided by the developers) and reviews of what's



European Air War

recently hit the shelves. As the reviews demonstrate, this genre has taken off—but we're still looking for the one title that puts it all together.

In an interesting development, PC Games has learned

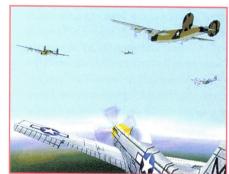
that Empire Interactive is working in conjunction with Rowan Software (Flying Corps Gold, Dawn Patrol) on MiG Alley, the working title

for an intense Korean Conflict sim set during the early '50s that should be out this fall.

Activision's Fighter Squadron: Screamin' Demons Over Europe (scheduled for summer release) takes a hard look at nine of the most famous World War II—era fighters. Thirty scenarios and three graphically diverse regions are portrayed. Not only will you be able to switch planes during missions, but you'll also be able to change crew positions—piloting the plane one minute, sliding into the tail-gunner's position or bombardier's seat the next.

Now that Red Baron II has hit retailers' shelves (see review), Dynamix is shifting its development efforts to Aces: X-Fighters (October) and Aces of the Pacific 2 (fall), two impressive World War II simulations. The former title is set in the skies over Europe, while AOTP2 will encompass the air war against the Japanese Empire over the vast Pacific Ocean. X-Fighters represents a literal as well as figurative departure from the

norm, since it will permit you to tinker with various aircraft in an effort to develop the ultimate highperformance fighter. AOTP2 is more of a traditional flight sim that—like its rich forebear—will be geared more



Aces: X-Fighters

toward modeling genuine combat aircraft, historically accurate missions, and protracted military campaigns.

Eidos will soon be shipping Flying Nightmares 2 (spring), its taut modern-era combat sim set in Cuba. FN2 features two of the most lethal aircraft ever to take flight, spotlighting the US Marines' AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter and the AV-8B Harrier 2 VSTOL jump jet. More importantly, FN2 boldly integrates a real-time strategic element into the overall scheme of play, charging you with overseeing and managing a ground war being simultaneously waged by US Marine infantry and armored units.

In **iF-22 v. 2** (spring), Interactive Magic proves that it's deeply committed to supporting and promoting this sim. iF-22 v. 2 will incorporate the all-new TALON (Total Air & Land Operations Network) campaign system, the entire Persian Gulf theater of

F-22 Air Dominance Fighter

From EF2000 to F-22



Digital Image Design, the company behind EF2000, has turned its attention to the popular F-22 with F-22 Air Dominance Fighter. Previous "first generation" F-22

sims have been geared more toward the arcade side—that is, the action was generally fast and furious at the expense of realism. DID, on the other hand, has always taken the realism track, and F-22ADF is no exception. The developer used the latest publicly available military data and teamed up with *World Air Power Journal* to make the sim as realistic as can be. The result is something more than just kill, kill, kill.

The F-22ADF interface operates in four different modules. A Quick Combat mission module is where most wannabe pilots will jump in. The Simulation module lets you fly a variety of single missions—from basic flight training to all-out ground assaults—allowing you to brush up on your piloting skills before jumping in for the real thing. Tour of Duty is the campaign module. Three linear campaigns will have you flying Saudi Arabian, Egyptian, and US F-22s over 4.5 million square miles of hostile Middle Eastern skies as you begin a career (29 missions total). The final module, the ACMI (Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation), will certainly be popular. It's basically a virtual VCR that lets you record a heated dogfight and play it back later, so you can see the maneuvers and tactics you used. Now there's no excuse for making the same mistake twice.

One of the unique features of F-22ADF is the ability to fly not only the F-22 Raptor, but an E-3 Sentry AWACS (Airborne Warning and Command) aircraft, too. When playing in the AWACS missions, you can direct the entire air war and command various squadrons to their target. But if you're one of those "If you want something right, you have to do it yourself" people, breathe a sigh of relief. Not only can you command the different flights of F-22, you can also jump right into any of them. Computer pilots not hitting the targets? No problem! Jump right in and do it yourself. And when you're done, jump right back into the E-3 any time, only to jump into an F-22 on a different mission. Now that's multitasking!

Realism and 3Dfx-accelerated graphics are F-22ADF's strong suits, but the realism also gives this sim a steep learning curve. You should definitely read the well-written manuals if you expect to get the most out of this sim. The one knock will be its lack of a mission editor,





Dig F-22ADF's stunning details, like that dam in the background.

though that is already being addressed in a planned add-on (which could be out by this summer). Like its real-life counterpart, F-22ADF stands poised to dominate the computer-generated skies in the foreseeable future.

— Christopher Tou



F/A-18 Korea

Hornet sequel glides to top

/A-18 Hornet 3.0 developed a loyal fan following largely due to its sophisticated avionics. F/A-18 Korea offers essentially the same ride, but this time it's dressed up with some eye-popping accelerated graphics that'll have these fans scrambling to fly this fresh new environment.

New 3Dfx/Glide-powered visuals offer attractive texture-mapped scenery, but the biggest improvement is the planes. They now assume a photorealistic quality; the light-sourcing effect is absolutely first-rate. Some impressive alpha-blending further suspends disbelief by displaying clouds, burning targets, and missile-smoke trails in filtered transparent layers.



iF-22 v. 2

operations, and several cosmetic upgrades, including graphically enhanced smoke trails and various translucent effects.

Although I-Magic recently confirmed that iA-10 Warthog has been indefinitely postponed, plans are underway to depict the US Navy's F-18E Super Hornet attack/strike fighter. Dubbed iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter, the carrier-based sim (summer release) will, like iF-22, feature an active, mouse-driven cockpit and a dynamic campaign generator capable of creating an unlimited number of unique missions. Catapult launches and recovery of returning aircraft will also be faithfully portrayed.

Easily the most anticipated combat-flight sim is MicroProse's Falcon 4.0 (spring). Draped around a potential modern-day war in Korea, Falcon 4.0, like its predecessors, focuses primarily on the exploits of a USAF F-16 squadron, although a complete air, land, and sea battle will be depicted. Get immersed in the real-time rigors of a protracted, dynamically constructed conflict, assigning pilots, planes, and weapons in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Falcon 4.0 will marry incredible photo-realistic graphics with superb flight,

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Transparent missile-smoke trails are a nice touch.

The sim's target-rich environment includes many well-drawn structures and ground emplacements that blend seamlessly into the textured landscape. On the flip side, the available Hawaiian and Korean theaters don't boast too much detail: Seoul looks like a tiny riverside village, and the hilly Korean terrain exhibits an angular appearance. Most digital pilots will likely forgive these shortcomings for the 20 fps rates the game delivers on less than state-of-the-art equipment with all options switched on.

The game offers a half-dozen training missions originating out of Oahu's Barber's Point N.A.S., a superb classroom module with 63 flyable tutorials and over 30 prescripted combat missions. A spanking new mission editor lets you create and fly unlimited custom scenarios. A comprehensive multiplayer menu (serial, modem, or four-

player network) even comes with its own special theater in Nevada.

F/A-18 Korea's authentic avionics are still impressive. Forget instant-action arcade mode: Every mission requires a proper engine start-up followed by some extensive taxiing before permission is granted for the active runway or steam catapult takeoff. Once you're airborne, you'll need to deal with accurate speed bleeding in high-G turns, reduced response at high altitudes, and a realistic engine spool-up lag. Mastering the high-fidelity APG-65 pulse-doppler radar also poses a huge challenge. Other than its unrealistically easy carrier landings and inaccurate high-altitude fuel consumption, Korea's flight model still ranks as one of the best on the market.

The game has a few other weaknesses, such as the oddly close proximity of mission

targets to your home airfield (rarely more than 30 or 40 miles) and some horribly sparse mission briefings. It's tough to get too down on Korea over these deficien-

cies, though, because they're more than offset by the game's host of impressive features, including an excellent 240-page manual and a superb replay/flight recorder that can save entire missions to tiny files.

There are some combat sims out there that offer superior graphics, and even one or two that can claim better flight modeling than F/A-18 Korea. There are very few, however, that bundle a solid combination of both elements into such an engaging and immersive package.

— Andy Mahood





Falcon 4.0

avionics, and weapons modeling in what could be the most realistic combat flight ever conceived.

European Air War (spring) represents MicroProse's long-awaited sequel to the critically acclaimed 1942: The Pacific Air War. Set in the European theater of operations during 1943, European Air War will let you fly 20 different aircraft drawn from the British, American, and German air forces. Embark upon various mission-based tours and careers or duel against fellow fliers via modem or LAN.

Developed by veteran game-designer Andy Hollis, Jane's F-15 (April) will take an exhaustive look at the USAF's nimble yet eminently powerful strike fighter. You can enlist in either of two full-featured campaigns, set over 2.5



Jane's F-15

Flight Unlimited II

Flv by PC Games' offices

'll be the first to admit it: Civilian aviation sims have never quite captured my attention like dyed-in-the-wool aircombat sims. Lacking the fierce opponents, the fancy avionics suite, and, above all, the awesome weapons, civilian aviation sims have typically taken a back seat.

Happily, my attitude has changed, thanks to Flight Unlimited II. Developed by the programming magicians at Looking Glass, FUII is a marvelous piece of software.



Spectacular weather conditions, such as crackling thunderstorms and high winds, help extol the virtues of FUII.

If you recall, the original game spotlighted various forms of aerobatic flying and flyers over 10 square miles of lush Vermont terrain. For the sequel, aerobatics were sidestepped in favor of civilian aviation. In FUII, you can soar to your heart's content over 11,000 square miles of the San Francisco Bay Area. Be warned, though: Staring slack-jawed at the Golden Gate Bridge or Half Moon Bay's radar array can cost you. Serious flight time is in



Bored to death? Sample one of 25 canned adventures, like this glorious carrier landing on the deck of the Enterprise.

order to learn and appreciate the basics of civil aeronautics, not to mention proper interfacing with the ground controllers. For instance, it takes discipline to taxi up to the runway (especially in a 35 mph crosswind!), follow the tower's directions, then execute a safe takeoff in line with FAA rules and regulations. And if you stray off course, the ATCs at SFO start issuing a spate of real-time orders to redirect you away from a potential midair disaster.

Five player-controllable aircraft are modeled here: a Piper Arrow, a de Havilland Beaver Seaplane (yes, you can take off and land on water), a North American P-51D Mustang (sans guns, of course), a multiprop Beechcraft Baron, and a simple trainer. Other aircraft—such as jumbo jets, cargo carriers, and helicopters—are included, but they can't be flown. Would-be pilots may take off and land at any of over 48 different airports dotting the metropolitan San Francisco area.

Each of the five cockpits is modeled accurately. Overall, the flight models are okay, although I did notice that some of the aircraft performed strange maneuvers. For instance, on several occasions, I managed to pop a wheelie

with the trainer, sailing off down the tarmac with a broken wing and torn fuselage trailing yards behind.

FUII contains a host of dazzling 3D visual effects. Crackling thunderstorms are amazing, with beaded drops of rain smearing and streaking the windscreen during flight.

Although these and innumerable other bells and whistles work in the game's favor, FUII still falters when it

comes to unseating Flight Simulator 98 as the reigning king of civilian aviation sims. Nevertheless, FUII complements the legendary Microsoft favorite, impressively showcasing cutting-edge technology and brilliant special effects in one sweeping motion.

-Marc Dultz



GAMEPLAY: B GETTING STARTED: B+ GRAPHICS : B+ 3D ACCELERATED : A-

MULTIPLAYER: N/A

SOUND CHECK: A-

Spot-on civilian aviation with

DEVELOPER: Looking Glass Studios PUBLISHER: **Eidos Interactive**

FLIGHT UNLIMITED

800-617-8737 WEB: www.eidosinteractive.com

PLATFORM: Win 95 CD REQUIRES:

P120, 16MB RAM, 190MB HD, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive, iovstick

RECOMMENDED: P200, 32MB RAM, 3Dfx card. 8x CD-ROM drive, force-

feedback joystick

STREET PRICE: \$50

million square miles of incredibly diverse southwest Asian terrain. Both pilot and backseat officer positions are accurately depicted, so you can fly cooperatively or competitively against one another.

Psygnosis plans to attack the flightsim genre with a WWII sim called Wings of Destiny (fall). Flying in war-torn Fortress Europa, you'll be able to settle into several of the most popular propeller-driven fighters of the time, signing on with the illustrious British Royal Air Force, the mammoth

US Army Air Corps, or the infamous German Luftwaffe.

SSI's upcoming SU-27 Flanker 2.0 (fall) builds upon the success of its critically acclaimed predecessor. Expect vast graphical improvements, employing state-of-the-art MIPmapping techniques to dress up the terrain, various atmospheric effects such as fog and lens flares, and a hi-res graphics engine for aircraft interiors and exteriors. Dynamic campaigns, resource management, and a full suite of multiplayer options are also planned.

Other important titles warrant brief mention here, although little information was available at press time. Looking Glass Studios plans to extend its Flight Unlimited line, introducing a third installment in this muchheralded civil-aviation series this fall. Around the same time, look forward to strapping into Flight Combat, obviously intended as a military crossover title using proven technology imported from the Flight Unlimited series.

Virgin has announced plans to release F-16 Aggressor (fall), which will be based



Night and weather effects are fully implemented in JSF.

Joint Strike Fighter

Cool planes, cooler graphics

echnology marches on. Innerloop, a small Norwegian company, has come up with a revolutionary new polygon-rendering system that blows everything you've previously seen right out of the sky. If it licenses its graphics engine to other sim makers, the genre could be revolutionized.

Over 10 million square miles of undulating mountainous terrain has been reproduced in eye-popping detail (right down to individual trees!). Also, these amazing landscapes flow by on 3Dfx and non-accelerated machines alike with detail and frame rate that put most other flight sims to shame. Transparent alpha-blending, dynamic light-sourcing, and attractive lens-flare effects accentuate the motion-picture—quality experience.

The setting is a PC fighter-jock's dream. Hop into the cockpit of a Boeing X-32 or Lockheed Martin X-35, each of which is vying to be America's 21st-century strike fighter. Bristling with stealth technology and packing

highly sophisticated weaponry, the aircraft can be flown in Afghanistan, Colombia, Korea, and the Scandinavian Kola Peninsula. An instant action "Dogfight" mode is provided, as is a full dynamic-campaign module. Multiplayer options include eight-player LAN or TCP/IP Internet connection, and the game should be on Mplayer by the time you read this.

JSF isn't a sophisticated sim like Longbow 2 or F-22ADF, but its purely theoretical flight model exhibits proper behavior and dynamics (including speed-bleeding in tight turns, sluggishness with full payloads, and high-G blackouts). Full weather and wind effects include snowstorms and turbulence. Sound effects are quite passable, and the somber score complements the game nicely.

Unfortunately, JSF doesn't offer any kind of training module. It's almost as if the Joint Chiefs of Staff flipped you the keys for this \$100 million bird and told you to go figure it out. A poorly laid out (and index-less) 144-page man-

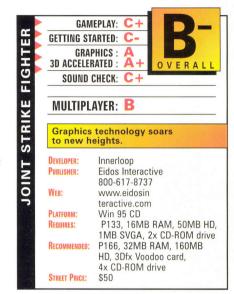


JSF's non-3Dfx graphics are equally stunning (800-by-600).

ual certainly doesn't help the learning curve. A lot of commands can't be executed from the keyboard because you must activate the

"live" MFD button that's only accessible with the mouse from the Virtual Cockpit view. This makes some critical functions difficult to access.

A campaign mission—builder screen allows you to select targets and fine-tune waypoints in your selected theater. Ground-hugging napof-the-earth flights are commonplace, and up



to three wingmen can be brought along to clear enemy air threats (all ground targets are your responsibility). Each of the four campaigns offers graduated difficulty levels, and your basic goal is to keep hitting the enemy harder than they can hit you. There's no compelling storyline to be followed here, and JSF suffers somewhat for it. You have unlimited ordinance at your disposal, there's no onscreen alter ego to grieve when killed, capture is impossible, and there are no medals or promotions to strive for. Success just doesn't give you the same warm feeling you get with other flight sims.

Fly-Bys

Here's a look at all the flight sims that have appeared in *PC Games* in the last 12 months (not including the reviews in these pages). Whether you like toodling around the skies in a civilian craft or hopping online for some fierce dogfights, there's something for you.

NAME	TYPE	REVIEWED	GRADE	
Air Warrior II	WWII combat	May '97	C-	
F/A-18 Hornet 3.0	Desert Storm combat	Sept. '97	B-	
F-22 Raptor	Modern combat	March '98	C+	
Flying Corps	WWI combat	April '97	A	
Flying Corps Gold	WWI combat	March '98	A-	
iF-16	Modern combat	Dec. '97	B+	
iF-22	Modern combat	Dec. '97	С	
Longbow 2	Modern combat	Feb. '98	A	
Flight Simulator 98	Modern civilian	Dec. '97	B-	
WarBirds 2.0	WWII online	Dec. '97	B+	

on the stalwart Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon. And, although Eidos Interactive has officially acknowledged cancellation of the on-again, off-again Team Apache helicopter project, it's considering a carrier-based expansion disc for its **Joint Strike Fighter** (see review), which could be released this spring.

All in all, flight-sim enthusiasts have lots to crow about.

— Marc Dultz



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SIMULATION

ATF Gold • US Navy Fighters • Flying Nightmares 2 Joint Strike Fighter • Ultim@te Race Pro

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These caveats aside, JSF offers solid play value over four huge campaigns. With graphics this exquisite, all flight-sim fans will want to test drive these puppies.

-Andy Mahood



The new, graphically enhanced version of a P-51D Mustang in AWIII. You can even make out a pilot seated inside the cockpit!

Air Warrior III

3D or not 3D?

n an effort to keep pace with technological advances and the competition, Kesmai (with the aid of I-Magic) has unveiled a third major update to Air Warrior. It adds 3Dfx support and 150 more single-player missions to the 10-year-old classic online sim.

There are now a whopping 450 engagements spread out across WWI, WWII, and the Korean Crisis. Moreover, six campaigns have been added to the fray, four of which portray the struggle in the vast Pacific theater of operations during WWII, while the remainder flesh out the Allies' effort in the ETO. Four WWII vintage Japanese aircraft have also been modeled, among them the Ki-43 "Oscar" fighter, the D3A1/A2 "Val" dive bombers, the B5N "Kate" torpedo plane, and the infamous A6M2 Zero fighter, commonly referred to as the "Zeke."

Aesthetically, AWIII now rivals the competition, thanks to its 3Dfx support. It sports highly detailed aircraft exteriors, beautiful scenery, and breathtaking visual effects (including smoke trails, lens flares, and atmospheric effects), all while maintaining acceptable frame rates. Furthermore, there's now force-feedback support.

Finally, real-time network speech with up to 16 online squad members prevents having

to continually key in canned in-flight commands or player-created messages. At press time, it was still being tweaked, so we couldn't fully test it.

Although much has improved, some facets still need an overhaul. AWIII still fails to include a virtual cockpit or padlock view, two seemingly essential viewing perspectives for this

type of intense head-to-head combat. The usual mix of ground vehicles are still in attendance, no matter the time frame or combatant. But that pales in comparison to some of the inexplicable mission results I achieved during offline play. For instance, on one mission, I was tasked with leading a group of eight Japanese Ki-84 Frank fighters against a swarm of incoming American P-51 Mustangs. Although I managed to shoot

down two planes before succumbing to enemy fire, the rest of my group fared far worse—all went down in flames without so much as a kill. End result? The mission was inexplicably scored as a complete victory for the Japanese side, and I was congratulated on a job well done! It's the same problem we had with Air Warrior II.

Although Air Warrior III may be one of the most sophisticated online flight sims on the market, its seemingly successful run and 10-year maturation process doesn't excuse the developer's poor execution of a number of key game elements. Doubtless, most of the game's faults will be rectified when the online version—which is still undergoing beta



testing—
finally debuts in the
months ahead. Until
then, put your wallet
back in your pocket.

-Marc Dultz

Sierra ProPilot

Setting off on the professional tour

irtually everyone agrees that the Flight Simulator franchise has enjoyed an unprecedented run as the champion of civilian-based flight sims. However, several newcomers and longtime players have finally decided to make a serious bid at unseating the heavily entrenched favorite. One is Sierra ProPilot, published by Dynamix and developed by the perennial flight enthusiasts over at the subLOGIC design bureau.

ProPilot may be one of the most ambitious civilian-based flight sims ever crafted, wedding spectacular graphics with incredulous breadth and scale, while depicting, in painstaking detail, five of the most popular single- and multi-engine civilian aircraft. Included are the Cessna Skyhawk 172P Trainer, the high-performance Beechcraft Bonanza V35, a twin-engine Beechcraft Baron B58, the Super King Air B200, and the twin-engine Cessna Citation 525 jet.



Got a hankering to tour the Grand Canyon? Try soaring low and slow over the Colorado River at dusk in this Beechcraft Baron B58 multiprop.

Amazingly, ProPilot surpasses Flight Simulator 98 in graphics and flight modeling, although it should be pointed out that ProPilot portrays both Instrument and Visual Flight Rules (IFR and VFR) flying only over the US. No matter: ProPilot's graphics are, in a word, astounding, with terrain and salient geographical sites rendered in vivid detail. Aircraft interiors are



You needn't worry about threading the needle of the Twin Towers or ditching in the Hudson River—the programmers seemed reticent about including collision detection.

stunning, authentically modeling everything from photo-realistic instrumentation panels to plush leather appointments running the entire length of the cabin. Analog and digital displays and switches are easy to read and clearly labeled. GPS navigational aids are portrayed, as is real-time interactivity with air-traffic controllers operating under stringent FAA guidelines. In addition, a comprehensive, fully illustrated manual details the intricacies of private and commercial aeronautics, explaining all there is to know from the fundamentals of flight to the rules governing the operation of aircraft in restricted airspace.



With so much going for it, you'd automatically assume that ProPilot would be the heir apparent. Unfortunately, it suffers from a number of glaring problems that, when taken collectively, relegate it to the mechanic's shop.

In many instances, suburban regions resemble featureless grasslands rather than bristling residential areas. Other

puzzling oddities include strange psychedelic patterns lazily rolling across the exterior of some of the skyscrapers while you're flying over New York City. More importantly, collision detection seems to have been overlooked. Even with crash-detection enabled, I was continually able to fly right through buildings, not to mention skip like a stone from the water and back into the air over the Hudson River and Long Island Sound. A recently released 6MB patch corrects various problems (mostly various sound bugs and problems with the nosewheel steering and braking on certain aircraft), but it fails to correct the aforementioned oversights.

Despite its obvious deficiencies, ProPilot still manages to do an admirable job of portraying civil and commercial aeronautics. It's a close second after Flight Unlimited II but a disappointing third behind what I consider Microsoft's crown jewel. — Marc Dultz



Red Baron II

The Baron has no clothes

ynamix's Red Baron was the swaggering John Wayne of WWI sims throughout the early '90s, and it earned its Greatest Games of All Time nomination by delivering an atmospheric game with a superb flight-model and strong attention to detail. Like most fans of the original, I have been patiently waiting since 1994 for Sierra/Dynamix to knock my wind socks off with the sequel.

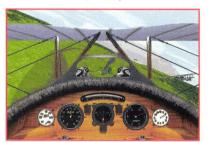
Unfortunately, Red Baron II drops its trousers instead of my socks. Although the sim offers solid gameplay, it appears to have been rushed out the door prematurely. With no support for 3D accelerators, a persistent crash-to-the-desk-top bug, and a substandard multiplayer module that limits Net play to Sierra's own extremely wobbly online service, RBII is very much a "coulda been, shoulda been" product.

The graphics are the first big letdown. RBII's dated SVGA visuals are likely to elicit yawns (a 3D patch has been hinted at), particularly with competitor Flying Corps Gold's visuals. Although the individual planes are nicely rendered, the pixelated terrain is extremely unattractive. The horizon seems to have been cut out with a dull pair of scissors, and the virtual cockpit used for padlock views is just plain butt-ugly, though the frame rate is quite reasonable for a non-accelerated game (it played well on a P133).

RBII earns back some points with its engaging gameplay and replay value. Twenty-two planes can be flown in an instant-action mode.

There are also 27 single missions that can be modified with a full-featured mission builder, or players can choose to fly for Britain, France, Germany, or the US in the historically faithful and engaging campaign mode that's described as dynamic, though it didn't seem to make a difference. Difficulty levels are fully scaleable, as is the realism of the flight model, which is generally well executed but not perfect.

The computer AI is very solid if you can forgive your wingman's tendency to forget mission objectives and chase off after targets of opportunity (this sim takes place before the invention of radios, so all you can do is make

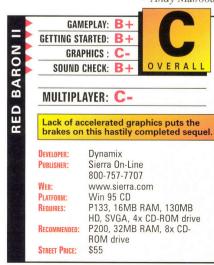


Heavy bombers are no match for a nimble scout.

obscene gestures at him). The sound enhances the atmospheric feel of aerial combat in its infancy. Engines sputter, fabric-covered wings creak under stress, church bells and air-raid sirens peal out warnings, and the bloodcurdling scream of a pilot jumping from his burning plane is just too gruesome to bear.

In RBII, we have a game that's so weighed down by its visual poverty and lack of finish that we must await further patches before we can decide if it even deserves consideration. I'm confident that it will eventually be made good—great, even—but right now, Flying Corps Gold offers the best barnstorming experience for WWI sim enthusiasts.

-Andy Mahood



COMMAND.

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(Turn page for more details)

ABSOLUTE ACTION.

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SUPREME



(Fiery aftermath of a URASS Patrol Unit)

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FULL 3D

















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CAVEDOG'S CONTINE ENCY PLAN

Bring on Krogoth!

The first TA

expansion pack
storms out of Seattle
with a new story —
and a Core creation
that's going to
Annihilate you

"I dream about throwing hundreds of units into battle—crashing, smoldering hulks of metal, explosions, mayhem, and victory," says TA designer and project leader Chris Taylor.

avedog's Total Annihilation stands

defiant as the dark-horse game

that came out of nowhere to set

a new standard for the real-time strategy

genre. Let's face facts—it takes a bruiser

to dethrone Red Alert as the RTS game of

choice for Professional Gamers' League

competition. TA has done that. Age of

Empires racks up larger sales, thanks to

the retail prowess of Microsoft, but TA

has captured the hearts of the majority of

RTS gamers that we talk to. While Starcraft

stalwarts maintain that TA is a novel, flash-

in-the-pan 3D fad soon to be forgotten, it

seems TA gamers are responding to something

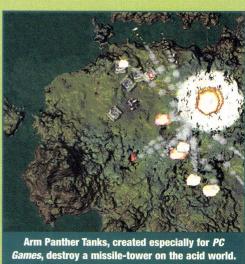
else—a blitzkrieg wargaming ethos they can't

get anywhere else.

With all the laurels bestowed upon it, the obvious question is, "What about Total Annihilation expansion packs and sequels?" *PC Games* traveled to snow-covered Woodinville, Washington (outside Seattle), to find out.

Total Annihilation is the first game Cavedog has produced. As such, the decision was made early on not to talk much about the project until there was something worthwhile to talk about. The same hesitancy to reveal details about upcoming TA projects remains the official policy at Cavedog.

By George T. Chronis



April 1998 • PC GAMES

But with a little cajoling, and some Hefeweizen to loosen tongues, PC Games got the goods.

The Plan

Cavedog plans to attack on three flanks with Total Annihilation games in 1998. First off is Total Annihilation: The Core Contingency, an expansion pack that should be on store shelves the last week of April. Later in the year, a second expansion pack will arrive, but the details are very hush-hush. Late in 1998, Cavedog will ship a full sequel (see sidebar), provisionally titled Total

Annihilation 2. But on closer examination, it appears Cavedog is stretching the meaning of what we normally think of as an expansion pack. Unlike Westwood. which throws out new levels and units without a thematic context in its Red Alert expansion packs, Cavedog

is actually producing a package that

plays more like a sequel-building a

new story with new worlds, levels, and units

to advance it. As for TA2, Taylor told us it

may be closer to a whole new game with a totally new interface-than a sequel in the traditional sense.

Cavedog's plan is a win-win for TA gamers if these humble guys and gals pull it off. If they're successful, they will also raise gameplay expectations for other RTS titles.

The Plot

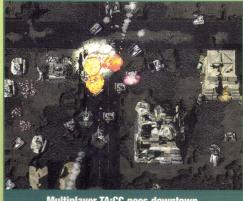
Although you can play on either the Arm or Core side and

> win the war. Core Contingency's starting point assumes that the Arm has won-

cleansing the galaxy of the machine intelligence Core. Sort

Arm Minelayer

of. The Core did a sneaky thing: It had a contingency plan in case of defeat—creating a back-up commander. The backup has been sent out to a region of space caught in a quantum anomaly, where the Core Commander's star system winks in and out between different quantum realities—existing in both and nei-

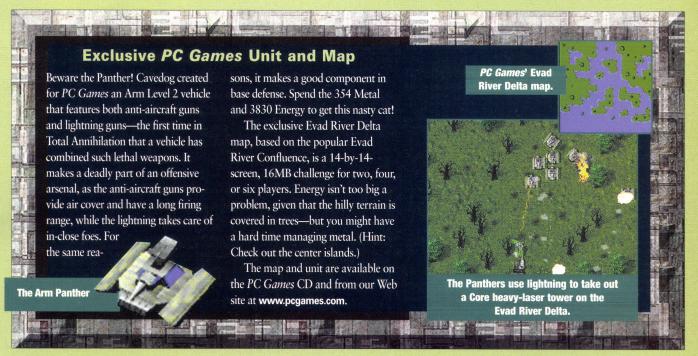


Multiplayer TA:CC goes downtown.

ther at the same time. Arm outposts on the frontier take notice of this peculiar star system and report it. Then Arm ships and begin to disappear. The Core is back, and with a vengeance. The Core's dastardly plan is to use ancient technology it has acquired in the other universe to eliminate the Arm. The technology, an implosion device, will fold the Arm's galaxy upon itself as it sucks the Arm universe through a black hole. The goal for Arm players is obviously to prevent the Core from implementing the weapon, while Core players must eradicate Arm resistance and launch the imploder. As in TA, either side can win.

The Units

According to lead mission-and-level designer Nathan Doster, TA:CC is going to be a harder game than the original. "We figure that Core





Contingency is going to appeal most to hardcore TA players, so we're making the levels more of a challenge. We're not just adding new units and levels; we're taking the gameplay mix as seriously, or more so, than we did in Total

Arm Advanced Sonar

The extra challenge begins with the capabilities of the new units. "Our mantra is to introduce complexity into the

gameplay by adding complexity in the units," Taylor says. "We're not going to be making any stupid ones."

TA:CC will ship with more than 250 units—TA's original 150, those that have been released as downloads on the Web (www.totalannihilation.com), plus 100 more unique to TA:CC. There's more to choose from, and there will be more to simultaneously manage. In

multiplayer matches, TA:CC will boost the number of units you can have at once from 200 to 500.

"Each unit plays an integral role within the needs of a specific level,"

Krogoth
Taylor says. "On tropical marsh planets, tanks and Kbots aren't much good, so we've introduced hovercraft that can speed across

boggy water. On water worlds, we've

designed construction submarines that can build underwater metal and energy facilities.

There's also a super-sub the size of a battleship that fires advanced guided torpedoes."

Core Sub-Hunter Plane

But the challenge also lies in how Cavedog is using those units in levels. Case in point is the special bonus level featuring the mega-Kbot Krogoth. As you might expect, Krogoth is a Core behemoth, more than twice as tall as a Commander. It has three weapon subsystems: Its fore-

arms are two massive guns, and it has two anti-air weapons on its back and a high-powered laser weapon on its head. Doster says the Krogoth level is separate from the Core Contingency plot, designed especially to test "hot-shot" TA players.

"I wanted to design a level that was a challenge to complete. If you play hard and do everything right,

Spying on TA2 Development

Annihilation,"

he says.

otal Annihilation's development was cloaked better than a Commander under full assault. The sequel is also shrouded in a fog of war, but designer Chris Taylor couldn't contain his enthusiasm about the Christmas title and lobbed some explosive shells of info our way.

TA2 will support Direct3D, Taylor says. This will be welcome news to 3D-accelerator owners, especially after plans for a TA 3Dfx patch were scotched recently because of a 20 to 25 percent performance slowdown.

TA2 will let you rotate the map and have a free-floating camera so you can view it from any angle, à la Myth.

"There is definitely a technology push," Taylor says. "It's not going to be the same old engine."

The TA2 engine will allow more units in the game at once, with Taylor looking to push the max from TA's 250 to perhaps as many as 1,000. Joining the Core and Arm forces will be two new races, one organic and one partially organic (though that could change by game release, Taylor warns). One of the new races will have psionic capabilities.

While TA2 will keep the features that made the original so popular—an ingenious energy–metal resource scheme, plenty of missions, tons of customization options, units and battles based on common-sense military knowledge and tac-

Chris Taylor was so busy Big Bertha-ing us that he didn't notice our eyeball cam.

tics, and fantastical explosions—look for biochemical weaponry and "intellectual"

units, Taylor says. A significant facet of real-world war is obtaining and using information, an area that's been underplayed in real-time strategy games so far.

"We're looking at having more spying abilities. Cameras maybe. Imagine an eyeball cannon," Taylor says, laughing at the image while obviously warming to the idea. "It shoots an eyeball across the map so you can see what's going on. Or sticky eyeballs that you can put on the bottom of enemy scout planes.

"Oh, and you know what I was just thinking about? A unit that tells me what you know.
Wouldn't it be cool to see what the enemy radar is picking up?"

TA2's already on our radar as a game to watch this year. Let's just hope Taylor doesn't notice our eyeball cam in his office. —Willem Knibbe



Arm Spy

you may be able to finish it in two hours, but this bonus level will give everyone fits," he says.

"When you enter the level, you'll face one Krogoth. He may not be fast, but he's supremely armored and has hard-hitting weapons. The D-Gun is not much use against him. But if you take your time and build up a base and lots of units, more Krogoths will lumber off the assembly line and it will be worse. Brute force won't work alone: you'll have to strategize and manage your attack differently to beat him."

Although Taylor and Doster were not 100 percent sure at press time, they're leaning toward making Krogoths available in multiplayer

games. Building the boss
unit would take a special
advanced-level facility that
only manufactures
Krogoths. Both the facility and the Krogoth
would be expensive and
time-consuming to build.
But given Krogoth's
awesome powers,
you know players
would find

Arm Underwater Metal Extractor

a way to construct them. PC Games saw more than

60 units in action while visiting Cavedog, many of which appear in these pages. The new units will change the game in dramatic and interesting ways. Some of our favorites are the resurrection units (the Arm Necro

and Core Rector), which can bring a burnt hulk back to life as long as its form is relatively intact.

The advancedtargeting AI enhancement, a fairly expensive super-radar,

eliminates the need for line-of-sight, allowing long-range guns and

missile launchers to lock onto enemy radar images.

The cloaked units are also intriguing, staying cloaked as long as there is sufficient power. Taylor says the amount of power needed will be substantial. Some facilities, such as the underwater power-generators, will be visible slightly above surface, but they'll duck underwater to

avoid an attack.

We're also looking forward to

Core AWAC
Plane

playing with both the sea and land-based mine layers, which have six different types of mines (including cloaked) at their disposal.

Especially fun for multiplay will be the decoy



Arm Targeting Al Upgrade

Commanders, assassin bots, cloaked spy units, and Commander bodyguards, which have two huge guns for arms.

The Worlds

Arm Bear Rocket Tank

Doster treats worlds and levels like a professor treats a class assignment. "You're supposed to come away from each level with a different experience, and each one puts players through a different learning curve," he says. TA:CC will come replete with four single-player and three deathmatch worlds, 12

Arm and 12 Core missions, plus the Krogoth mission.

In single-player missions, you'll start in a water world, where you'll immediately have to learn the new underwater

metal-extractors, power gen-

erators, subs, and so on. The water world was created, Doster says, in reaction to feedback from deathmatchers who griped that TA's primarily land-battle-based maps made huge, ship-to-ship fleet offensives impossible.

Once you conquer the water-world missions, you'll move to a lush jungle world,

where mastery of hovercraft units will be essential. You'll then be tested by a rocky, barren world before



This ice-world shot shows the new construction subs and underwater metal extractor.

finishing up in an ice world that will feature fierce ice storms much more damaging than TA's meteor showers. In many cases, there will be indigenous life forms on hand to get in the way. Some of them, like the fire-breath-

ing water serpent, will attack your units and fight

back if fired upon.
Deathmatchers
will be treated
to 30 maps in
urban, crystal,
and acid worlds.
Taylor says the deathmatch worlds are a "hint
of things to come" in TA2.
The acid world will come

Core Minelayer Ship with seas of corrosive liquid that will likely

exact a damage penalty on units trying to cross. The urban world features ruined cities full of damaged buildings that can provide cover as well as huge sources of metal.

End Game

Core Contingency was pretty far along during *PC Games*' visit to Cavedog, so we were treated to a little multiplayer match using the latest version of the game and the *PC Games* Evad River Delta map. New units such as the hovercraft weren't quite finished

April 1998 • PC GAMES

Mastering the TA Map and Mission Editor

f you have the hard drive, Cavedog has the editor for you! The 600MB to 800MB Total Annihilation Map and Mission Editor, to be released with the Core Contingency expansion pack and also available from the TA Web site (www.totalannihilation.com), isn't just a watered-down editor for simplistic map/mission making. It's the same tool the TA team uses.

Created from scratch by three Cavedog programmers when TA was just a gleam in the company's eye, the editor has been tweaked slightly for public consumption. No features were disabled, Cavedog says; only some ease-of-use features were added.

Jump in with both feet and you'll pick it up, says Nathan Doster, lead mission-and-level designer.

"There is so much potential there," Doster says. "You can tweak elevations and cut and paste chunks of sections [from one map to another] to make your map more interesting."

He typically has four to six missions cooking at once and spends days, even weeks or months, designing, constructing, scripting, and tweaking each one. Often, to relax, he'll start designing a new map.

"Usually, you can assemble a rough map in a matter of hours. Then tidy it up a bit and start placing features—trees, rocks, and so on," he says. "Next, set your world parameters—the wind speed, water level, starting points, etc. Then give it a test run in Skirmish mode to be sure everything looks and plays the way you want."

Designing missions is a bit more complicated. Before you even open the editor, you need to consider what you want the player to experience—the type of mission, Doster says. Design a map to suit those needs, then place the units and start scripting them.

"The whole time [I'm scripting], I'm thinking about the player," Doster says. "What is the player thinking? What would he be constructing? What will he be doing? And I start playing him. I try to anticipate his actions and counter them in the mission."

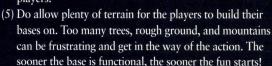
Top 5 Mission Do's and Don'ts

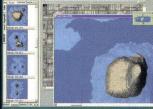
Doster took a break from Core Contingency crunch time to share his design philosophies with *PC Games*. (For the complete Q&A, visit www.pcgames.com.) In keeping with Cavedog's "Hey, you paid for it, it's your game, do what makes you happy" philosophy, he adds this caveat: "You're making maps and missions for yourself and your friends—make them any way you want!"

That said, here's his guide to what to avoid and embrace when creating your TA maps and missions.

Multiplayer Maps

- (1) Do try to be fair—that may not require that starting points be exactly symmetrical or that the metal deposits be exactly
 - alike, but think about whether you would like to be the poor sucker that gets stuck with barren starting point 3.
- (2) Do try to make the maps visually interesting.
- (3) Do try to make maps that challenge players to break out of their usual mode of play.
- (4) Don't be afraid to try something different. Make a map designed for allied play, or for just two players.



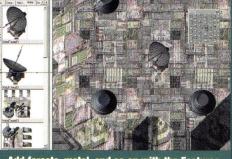


Double-click on the Terrain palette at left to move a section to your work area. Tweak it 'til you're satisfied, then drag it onto your map.

Missions

- (1) Don't make the mission impossible (although some people like the "I know I'm going to die, but I'm taking as many of these suckers with me as I can!" missions).
- (2) Don't make puzzle-missions. Unless you are designing for the adventure-game crowd, allow for a variety of player strategies.
- (3) Do design a variety of missions. This helps you to become a better mission designer and keeps your players on their toes.
- (4) Don't limit your players too much. True, there's room for "Commander goes it alone" missions (two or three in 50 isn't too bad), but when the player is used to choosing from hundreds of units...
- (5) Do watch as many players as you can when they play, and design missions as though you were playing them. We have

frequent (brutal) multiplayer games in the TA development bunker. I generally move from player to player, looking over their shoulders. A lot of the cool moves in the missions have resulted.



Add forests, metal, and so on with the Features palette (left). Remember to frequently update the Radar view (upper right).

Rekindle your youth.





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yet, but watching them stream off at high speed gave us a tantalizing taste of what we'll be playing with soon. Although we didn't get a chance to test single-player mode, Taylor claims the AI has been enhanced so that computer opponents no longer build units they don't need. There will also be enhanced tournament support built in. This includes the ability to set a time limit as well as expanded victory conditions, such as number of kills or energy and metal produced. An enhanced player-

information feature will also be added.

As for the yet-to-be-named second expansion pack, he was just about ready to spill his guts to us, but the effects of the Hefewiezen were wearing off, and he clammed up. But we've invited him on a microbrewery tour, so stay tuned.

For expanded TA:CC coverage, including a peek at 30 of the new units, visit www.pcgames.com.

Arm Hovercraft Platform

Barking Up Cavedog's Tree

n an era when game companies seem to produce loads of hype before even getting one product out the door (see "Slippery Shooters" in this month's GameWire), Cavedog Entertainment's arrival was refreshing.

They waited til they had something on the shelves before tooting their own horn, and they let the quality of Total Annihilation, their debut offering, do a lot of the tooting.

"We like to underpromise and overdeliver," says John Uppendahl, director of communications.

Cavedog, formed in 1995, now has to get used to the spotlight as an up-and-coming developer/publisher.

That developer/publisher distinction is important, says founder Ron Gilbert. While Cavedog is owned and distributed by GT Interactive, Gilbert made sure he retained all the publishing rights—which means Cavedog controls all the advertising and marketing for its products.

It was a savvy move by an industry veteran. Gilbert, designer of Maniac Mansion and Monkey Island 1 and 2, left LucasArts in 1992 and founded Humongous Entertainment. He quickly established it as a premier company for children's software with such award-winning titles as Pajama Sam in No Need to Hide When it's Dark Outside and the Putt-Putt and Let's Explore... series.

"When I founded Humongous, it wasn't to focus on children's software; I wanted to do a wide range of stuff," Gilbert says. "Fortunately, it's worked out great for us. It took off, then it became time to do mainstream stuff."

So as not to dilute Humongous' image, Gilbert formed Cavedog after having several meetings with designer Chris Taylor, who'd done such games as Hardball 2 and Triple Play Baseball.

The two found they had similar thoughts on how a company should operate and what was missing from the real-time strategy genre, which Taylor had been looking to enter forever. Taylor was hired and went about constructing the TA team. Now Gilbert looks to lead Cavedog in new directions.

"Our goal is to make Cavedog a premium brand people can trust, so people know if it's a Cavedog game, it's good," Gilbert



Founder Ron Gilbert aims to make Cavedog humongously trusted.

says. "We're coming up with three to four categories that are going to be our strengths."

As TA's release shows, Cavedog isn't afraid of crowded markets. It's prepping a first-person action game for which it's writing its own engine.

"We're not in favor of licensing stuff," Gilbert says. "We develop all our own tools in-house."

Also underway is a "hardcore RPG." That project is being led by John Cutter of Betrayal at Krondor fame. It'll have an online component, but it won't be a persistent world like Ultima Online.

And finally, Gilbert himself is working on a hybrid fantasy/RPG game.

"The story has been around for quite awhile," he says. "I thought I would like fantasy/RPG games more than I do, so I want to take what I think one should be and make a game. It worked for Maniac Mansion..."

Guiding all the projects will be basic Cavedog tenets—clean and simple interfaces, customizability, an architecture that allows for game expansion, and attention to gamer feedback.

"Early on, we wanted the [Cavedog] Web site to be a twoway communication channel. That builds loyalty to customers—it shows we care about them," Gilbert says.

The TA Web site (www.totalannihilation.com) lets people suggest new units and vote on those suggestions: the Flakker Anti-aircraft Gun is a result of such communications.

Questions about planned release dates were politely swatted away, and when asked if the projects have names, Gilbert laughed and said: "Yeah. Game 1, Game 2, and Game 3."

—Willem Knibbe

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A Basketful of Easter Eggs

A guide to the hidden secrets in some of your favorite games

By Shane Mooney

aster: a time of rebirth, a season of new growth—but a vast computergame wasteland falling squarely between the Christmas monster-hits blitzkrieg and the summer-leftover Crap-O-Rama. So while kids are busy trampling each other in hopes of finding poorly colored hard-boiled eggs, you're stuck playing two-fisted gaggers like Politika. Well, you may be a bit old to be looking under every rock, log, and couch cushion in hopes of winning a life-sized chocolate bunny, but you don't have to go far to find those cool Easter eggs hidden in your favorite computer games.

Easter eggs—those funny, witty, and sometimes obscene or distasteful secret areas of computer games programmers sneak in as sort of an inside joke—have been around since text-based adventures. Here are a few of our favorites from recent hits.

In a Galaxy Far, Far Away

Leading the Easter-egg brigade are those wily programmers at LucasArts, a company you can count on for a few good eggs.



Considering all Max's cameos (shown here in Jedi and Outlaws), it's no wonder there hasn't been a sequel to Sam and Max Hit the Road.



Is there a more appropriate Easter egg than a rabbit? Well, maybe not if he's the homicidal Max. The most notorious of bunnies makes a guest appearance in almost every LucasArts game, including Afterlife, Shadows of the Empire, and, of course, Jedi Knight (see *PC Games*, January 1998). He even makes a cameo in **Outlaws**, as do a bespectacled poodle and a crazy squirrel. To see them, kill all the enemies in the Deputy historical mission, then go back to the area with the three doorways. A secret compartment opened (hit Tab and you'll see it). Go on through to find them and hear Max's funny ditty.

To see the strangest Outlaws egg, get some dynamite on the first level (either by finding it or by typing **olpostal** and **olash** to max out your ammo) and throw a stick of the stuff into the outhouse. When it blows, there'll be a pool of green ooze. Jump into it, then crawl around at the bottom until you eventually come to a spaceship. Find the door to the side and hit the Spacebar to reveal a couple of Grays doing their livestock thing.

The Outlaws poodle makes another appearance—and when you shoot him, he barks just before bursting into flames. If

you head straight forward from your start point in the Sanchez Bounty level, he's on the cliff opposite you—directly ahead and all the way across the level. He can also be seen using the scope from certain vantages on the high walls surrounding Sanchez's fort. And while you're at it, check out the Indiana Jones idol in the Bloody Mary bounty level (it's in the cave at the end of the tunnel).



Many Star Wars fans have their suspicions about that seemingly innocuous droid, Gonk, who's managed to pop up in every film. Some have even half-jokingly suggested a certain divinity, creating a few religious followers on several Internet sites. Jedi Knight helps fan the flames of fanaticism with its Gonk Easter egg. Merely bump into this trash-canwith-feet five times, and he'll start spouting off "Chris Ross is God" (Ross is one of the game's programmers) in Morse code.



Quake II's Tank and Iron Maidens seem to have an interesting relationship.

All This and an Anal Probe, Too

Few computer-game antagonists have been as good at giving us the willies as the marine-mutilating Strogg in Quake II. But even if you've lived to see the end, you probably ain't seen nothin' yet.

If you ride the train in Station Two in the Lost Station level, you'll find a bloated and bloodied rubber duckie; and after destroying the reactor in Unit Six, you'll find that a new door in the outdoor pools has opened. It leads to a large post with our old friend the Dopefish just behind it. But the best Easter egg is the Pimp Tank, found after the Final Confrontation. Once you've beaten the end boss, go down a ramp to an underground area where the power-ups are. Use your rocket launcher to blast through the

cracked wall at the back of one of the hallways to reveal "The Hall of id." In here are several black-and-white pictures of the team who worked on the game. And if you go to the end of the hallway, there's a stairwell that leads down to another hidden chamber. Here you'll find a Tank reclining on a chair with two amorous Iron Maidens sitting on his lap.

Eggs-cellent Adventures

If you're eager to join the Easter-egg hunt but prefer low-impact gaming to the shoot-'em-ups, you're in luck. We've uncovered a basketful from the adventure, RPG, and flight-sim genres. While you won't win any extra Easter-basket goodies for finding them, they're cholesterol-free, don't break, and are good for a laugh.

You may think you've explored and clicked on everything in Riven, but you probably haven't seen the designers' kids in the rocks. As soon as you exit the cage at the very beginning, look left and up to see Richard VanderWende's child in the lower right-hand corner of your screen. You can also go over to the cliff by this same cage and look down. If the guard's body has been removed, you should be able to see the faces of Robyn Miller's two kids in the upper-left corner as well.



Sneakily ghosted in the rocks (we've boxed it for you) is an image of a Riven designer's child.

For those who prefer their eggs a bit raw, load Fallout. If you hold down the Shift key when you click on the Credits button from the main menu, you'll see some quotes from the game's development team, a few of which definitely would be zapped by a V-chip.



Speaking of government intervention, if you don't believe Microsoft is the Evil Empire, why not fly into Redmond and offer your support? In Flight Simulator 98, select FLY NOW from the opening screen, then select SCENERY COMPLEXITY with IMAGE COMPLEXITY at VERY DENSE. Now, from WORLD, choose GO TO from the main menu, then EXACT LOCATION. Set LATITUDE to N47° 39.08', LONGITUDE to W122° 8.69', ALTITUDE to 100, and HEADING to 342. You'll now be facing the Microsoft RedWest Campus, home of the Microsoft Flight Simulator team. Fly directly toward the center of the building you're facing and try to land your Cessna in the lobby. If you make it, the Flight Simulator Team will be waiting to welcome you.

Got some nifty Easter eggs of your own? Send 'em to ccohen@pcgames.com. If we run them on a future Cheats page, we'll send you a *PC Games* T-shirt and a free game for your efforts.

FABERGÉ EGGS

he current crop of games aren't the only ones with Easter eggs. Here are a few classics:

One of the most famous eggs ever is in SimCopter. A Maxis programmer challenged the hetero bias in computer games and put in scantily clad men, a couple of whom kiss. The programmer was fired for his unauthorized egg. To see it, hit Ctrl + Alt + x to access the cheat mode, then type Warp me to career: 29 to reach the 10th mission, and then Been there, done that to finish the mission. You'll also find other eggs popping up on certain dates, like April Fool's Day.

Dates (calendar, not romantic!) also play a role in other games. Set your computer's calendar to December 25 and fire up Crusader: No Regret for a holiday musical treat. Also, in the shareware and full versions of Raptor, set your computer to May 16 (the producer's birthday) to get some interesting sound effects.



Bikini-clad men smooching got a Maxis programmer fired.

For those of you who think Ewoks were the worst thing to happen to the *Star Wars* movies, here's your chance to get revenge. In **Dark Forces**, Type **imlame** to turn on god mode, then jump down into the pit next to where you begin the first level. Move up the left wall, pressing the Spacebar the whole time (as you would when looking for a secret door). You should eventually get into a small room with a chain in the middle of it. There's another secret door in here; open it and you should find a strangely behaving Ewok who serves as good target practice.

WEASEL'S WATCH



Maps, mods, missions, and more

THEWEASEL

Erase Yourself in Quake II

ever in the history of gaming has there been more cool game stuff made by people who don't get paid to make it. Pick a modifiable game, and Joe P. Seestud down the street

has done a map for it. Or a mod. Or a mission. Or even a desktop theme.

This is the page where you'll find all that—every month. If you can get it for free and it makes your gaming experience better, it could well get a mention right here.

But first, an admission: I, TheWeasel, am a Quake II slut. It's what I play when I don't "have" to play a game. And I play it a lot. Then I play it some more.

So when it comes time to look for the latest 'n' greatest user-created stuff, I naturally tend to drift in a Quakewardly direction. This page, however, is meant to cover everything under the sun. Did you just play an awesome user-created flight-sim mission? Got a cool UO character manager? Find yourself trumped in a Steel Panthers scenario? Write to TheWeasel

@pcgames.com telling me why it's good and where you got it.

This month's rockin' mod is the Eraser bot by Ryan Feltrin, aka Ridah. It lets you hone your Quake II multiplayer skills without the embarrassment of being called a no-skilz newbie on your favorite Quake II server.

And hone you will. The Erasers simulate human opponents, and they're tough (especially on the hardest setting). Their AI is better than the HI on most servers—Erasers strafe, jump, dodge, and switch to appropriate weapons based on the situation, and they don't do stupid stuff like crouch in one place and fire a blaster when you're launching rockets.

They're also fully customizable. Open the bots.cfg file in your quake2/eraser folder and roll your own bots. You can name them, set their appearance, and assign skill levels to firing accuracy, aggressiveness, and combat skills (strafing, jumping, etc.). You can even specify a bot's favorite weapon and whether he or she is a camper or a quad monger. I created a bots file based on the Quakeheads at *PC Games*: To play us (uh, sort of), grab our CD and install Eras1025.exe, copy the text from the CD's description window, paste it into the bots.cfg file in your quake2/eraser directory, and put "#" before all the bots besides those you just pasted in. Go into the game, type **num_bots 4** at the console, and you'll be fragging us. Or we'll be fragging you.

"[I did the Eraser bot] mainly out of disappointment in the AI of

Quake II, but also as an experiment," Feltrin says. "I wanted a navigational system that was fast enough not to slow down a single-player game, but intelligent enough to be far superior to that of Quake II's AI."

The bots learn the best routes from you—every time you cruise around a level and pick stuff up, you're laying "nodes." The bots remember these, so the next time you play the map, they'll be ready to frag from the get-go.

Feltrin, a 22-year-old Australian, is hardly new to the mod game—he's the guy who did the innovative QuakeRally, bringing racing to Quake. He

also worked on the X-Men: The Ravages of Apocalypse Quake total conversion for Marvel Interactive.

He and his Net buddy Rowan "Sumaleth" Crawford are the main players at Impact Development, which Feltrin describes as "just the name we use to release our projects. We're all into making games that people will play, so our goal is to make stuff that won't get deleted within a few minutes."

For more info and the latest release of Eraser, head to impact.frag.com.

Playing a map, mod, or mission that rocks your world? Tell TheWeasel all about it at TheWeasel@pcgames.com.

Installing and Launching

o install the Eraser bot, go to PC Games.exe, highlight "Mod of the Month," and click on the Install icon. It will automatically put an "eraser" directory in your C:\quake2 directory.

To launch an Eraser game, use the Windows Run command (from the Start button) and enter: C:\quake2\quake2 +set game eraser +skill 2 +deathmatch 1 +map mintro.

That command assumes Quake II is installed on your C: drive. The "+skill 2" setting is for medium difficulty (1 is easy, 3 is very hard). The "+map mintro" setting lets you specify any map you want. The Eraser mod works on any Quake map, though base1, base2, and mintro have been optimized.

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For games we've rated as an A or A-, admittance to the A-List is the ultimate honor. If it's on this list, it's not just great, it rocks. Serious gamers will want all of these titles in their collections.

Civilization II	(June '96)	MicroProse
Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far	(Jan '98)	Microsoft
C&C: Red Alert	(Feb '97) V	Vestwood Studios
Diablo	(Feb '97) Bliz	zzard Entertainment
Duke Nukem 3D	(July '96)	GT Interactive
Dungeon Keeper	(Sept '97)	Electronic Arts
FIFA 98	(March '98)	Electronic Arts
Jedi Knight	(Dec '97)	LucasArts
Links LS '98	(Oct '97)	Access Software
Longbow 2	(Feb '98)	Electronic Arts
Master of Orion II	(March '97)	MicroProse
MDK	(May/June '97	7) Playmates
Myth	(Feb '98)	Bungie
Myth NHL 98	(Feb '98) (Nov '97)	Bungie Electronic Arts
NHL 98 Oddworld:	(Nov '97)	Electronic Arts
NHL 98 Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee	(Nov '97)	Electronic Arts GT Interactive
NHL 98 Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee Pro Pinball: Timeshock!	(Nov '97) (Feb '98) (Sept '97)	Electronic Arts GT Interactive Empire Interactive
NHL 98 Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee Pro Pinball: Timeshock! Quake	(Nov '97) (Feb '98) (Sept '97) (Oct '96)	Electronic Arts GT Interactive Empire Interactive GT Interactive

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING

Yes, the *PC Games* editors play tons of games, but there are some we've stuck with beyond the call of duty. Here are the five games we've been playing the most over the past month.

 $\cdot 1$ Quake IIo

2 Total Annihilation

3 FIFA 98

Myth:
The Fallen Lords

5 Worms 2



HOW WE RATE GAMES

to rate games. Everyone knows what our grades mean without needing an in-depth explanation or clever chart: an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in six key areas. We also select a Game of the Month for each issue. We review games when and only when the makers say they're ready for review.

GAME of the MONTH: The *PC Games* Game of the Month is the one title among the month's releases that stands out from the rest. While it's generally the best overall game of the month, a game will occasionally warrant this honor not because it's the highest-rated game in the issue, but because it's a standout in one or more areas.

GAMEPLAY: In a nutshell, how much fun is it to play? This takes into account the quality of the game's interface and control scheme, and is weighted more heavily than other ratings in the overall grade.

■ **GETTING STARTED:** How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)

GRAPHICS: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they serve the game? If a game's 3D-accelerated graphics are significantly different than its standard look, we offer separate grades.

SOUND CHECK: How good are the game's sounds and musical score, and how well do they serve the game?

OVERALL GRADE: All in all, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

MULTIPLAYER: How much value will you get from the game's multiplayer element, if there is one? (N/A = not available) This independent rating takes into account ease of multiplayer setup.



Greatest Games of All Time

DIAMOND

ere's your chance to speak to the games industry. Have you ever considered how many PC games have been released over the years? Just think about all those hours you've spent enthralled by your own favorites. So imagine how hard it is to pick, from all those thousands of titles, just 100 to be nominated for the ultimate gaming honor—the PC Games Greatest Game of All Time.

We've done just that so that you can select which of our nominees in each category stands out as the finest of that genre. And then, most importantly, you get to pick that ever-so-special one that does something a little extra.

To vote, find the game of your choice in each of the categories

and check that box. Then fill in the blank space on the entry form for the overall prize—the Greatest Game of All Time. If there's a game that didn't make this list, just write in your entry in the "Other" category. Mail in your ballot or cast your vote at www.pcgames.com/ggvote.

Just for voting, you're automatically entered into a drawing for a chance to win cool prizes courtesy of Diamond Multimedia, CH Products, and Kali.

Since the *PC Games* Greatest Game of All Time accolade is voted by you, the games players, there's no more important prize in the gaming industry. So turn the page, view the full list of honored nominees, and make your mark. Have a say—vote today...

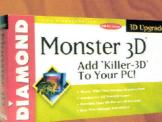
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- 1 Diamond Multimedia Monster Sound M80 Audio Card
- 1 CH Products Racing Wheel
- 1 CH Products Racing System
- 1 CH Products Pro Throttle
- 1 CH Products Gamestick
- 1 CH Products Gamestick 14
 1 Kali online-game–service registration

FIRST PRIZE (1):

- 1 Diamond Multimedia Monster 3D Accelerator Card
- 1 Diamond Multimedia Monster Sound M80 Audio Card
- 1 CH Products Racing Wheel
- 1 CH Products Racing System
- 1 Kali online-game-service registration

SECOND PRIZE (1):

- 1 CH Products Pro Throttle
- 1 CH Products Gamestick
- 1 CH Products Gamestick 14
- 1 Kali online-game-service registration

THIRD PRIZE (2):

- 1 Kali online-game-service registration
- 1 PC Games T-shirt

RUNNERS-UP (15):

1 Kali online-game-service registration





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GAMES Of All Time



ACTION Archon	RPG Bard's Tale	My vote for the Greatest G	ame of All Time is:
☐ Crusader: No Remorse ☐ Dark Forces ☐ Descent ☐ Doom	☐ Betrayal at Krondor☐ Daggerfall☐ Diablo☐ Might and Magic	Name:	
☐ Doom II ☐ Duke Nukem 3D	☐ Ultima IV ☐ Ultima Underworld 2	Street address:	
☐ Hexen ☐ Hexen II	☐ Wasteland ☐ Wizardry VII	City/State:	
☐ Interstate '76 ☐ Jedi Knight	Other:	Daytime phone #: ()	Age:
☐ Magic Carpet ☐ MDK ☐ Prince of Persia ☐ Quake ☐ Quake II ☐ Rebel Assault ☐ Star Control 2 ☐ System Shock	SIMULATION Aces of the Deep Mech Warrior 2 Pro Pinball: Timeshock! SimCity 2000 TIE Fighter Wing Commander III Wing Commander IV	San Mateo, CA 94 PC Games Greatest Games of All Time P Official Sweepsta 1. To Enter: No purchase necessary. Only one entry per than one entry will be disqualified. To enter for your	1 Mariner's Island Blvd., Ste. 700 1404 resented by Diamond Multimedia kes Rules r person, please. Anyone submitting more chance to be one of twenty (20) winners
☐ Tomb Raider ☐ Wolfenstein 3D ☐ Other:	X-Wing X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter Other:	in the PC Games Greatest Games of All Time Presen (1) Complete the Greatest Games of All Time ballo Games and mail to Greatest Games of All Time, c/c Ste. 700, San Mateo, CA 94404. (2) Complete and online at www.pcgames.com/ggvote. For your entry	t found in the April 1998 issue of <i>PC</i> pPC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., I electronically submit the ballot found
ADVENTURE Curse of Monkey Island Dark Earth Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within Kings Quest VII Lands of Lore Myst Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee Phantasmagoria Riven Sam and Max Hit the Road Secret of Monkey Island Spycraft Twinsen's Odyssey Zork: Nemesis Other:	SPORTS FIFA 98 FPS: Baseball Pro '98 FPS: Football Pro '96 Hardball 4 Links LS '98 Monday Night Football '98 NBA Live 98 NHL 98 Other:	in the Greatest Game of All Time category. All mail entries must be received by April 14, 199 received by 11:59 p.m. PST on April 14, 1998. Spon damaged, misdirected, illegible, incomplete, postage-phone-line, hardware, software or program malfun computer transmissions or network connections tha mail entries, you must use the official readers' poll facsimiles, and other reproductions will not be accept entries/ballots allowed. All entries become the prope Entrant cannot enter by both the Web and regular mr. 2. Prizes: Grand Prize (1): A Diamond Multimedia Mo Multimedia Monster Sound M80 Audio Card, a CH Racing System, a CH Products Pro Throttle, a CF Gamestick 14, and a Kali online-game-service regist First Prize (1): A Diamond Multimedia Monster 3D. Monster Sound M80 Audio Card, a CH Products Ra and a Kali online-game-service registration. Approxic CH Products Pro Throttle, a CH Products Gamestick online-game-service registration. Approximate retail game-service registration and a PC Games T-shirt. A (15): A Kali online-game-service registration. Approximate retail game-service registration and a PC Games T-shirt. A (15): A Kali online-game-service registration. Approximate retail game-service registration and a PC Games T-shirt. A (15): A Kali online-game-service registration in a rand a Judging: All 20 winners will be determined in a rand	sors assume no responsibility for lost, late, due mail or entries, or for computer system, trions or other errors, failures or delays in it are human or technical in nature. For US ballot found in this magazine. Photocopies, ed. No facsimile or mechanically reproduced rty of the sponsor and will not be returned. ail. Multiple entries will not be eligible. Inster 3D Accelerator Card, a Diamond Products Racing Wheel, a CH Products I Products Gamestick, a CH Products tration. Approximate retail value: \$645. Accelerator Card, a Diamond Multimedia icing Wheel, a CH Products Racing System, mate retail value: \$460. Second Prize (1): A, a CH Products Gamestick 14, and a Kali value: \$205. Third Prize (2): A Kali online-upproximate retail value: \$35. Runners-up oroximate retail value: \$20. All prizes will
BRAIN DRAIN Chessmaster 5500 Lemmings Tetris You Don't Know Jack Other:	☐ Command and Conquer ☐ Dungeon Keeper ☐ HoMM II ☐ Jagged Alliance ☐ Lords of the Realm II ☐ Master of Orion II	on or about April 30, 1998 by PC Games magazine, related to this sweepstakes. Judges reserve the exclusito this promotion without claim for damage or recousweepstakes, entrants agree to be bound by the rules be final. Odds of winning depend on the total numbe be notified by mail. All winners will be required to signiability release within 21 days of notification. If the aperiod properly executed, or is returned from the pos	whose decisions will be final in all matters ve right to interpret all conditions in regard tree of any kind. By participating in the and the decisions of the judges, which shall er of eligible entries received. All winners will an and return an affidavit of eligiblity and fifdavit is not returned within the given time t office as undeliverable, an alternate winner
FLY/DRIVE 1942 Pacific Air War AH-64 Longbow 2 Apache EF2000 Grand Prix II Falcon 3.0 Flying Corps Gold IndyCar II MS Flight Simulator NASCAR Racing 2 Red Baron Other:	☐ MULE ☐ Myth: The Fallen Lords ☐ Panzer General ☐ Panzer General II ☐ Pirates! ☐ Populous ☐ Privateer ☐ Steel Panthers II ☐ Syndicate ☐ Theme Park ☐ Total Annihilation ☐ Warcraft II ☐ X-COM: UFO Defense ☐ Other:	will be chosen. If the Grand Prize winner is under the also sign and provide their social security number on Liability & Publicity. Except where prohibited, accepto use his/her name, likeness, and biographical data fwithout additional compensation. 4. General Conditions: Sweepstakes is open to all US r Media Group, Diamond Multimedia, CH Products, I representatives, distributors, retailers, advertising and families of each. All federal, state, and local laws app be substituted. All taxes on prizes are winner's sole reagree that all prizes are awarded on the condition tha Multimedia, CH Products, Kali, their agents, represer whatsoever for any injuries, losses, or damages of any or use of the prize. Winners further acknowledge that any manner responsible or liable for any warranty, re implied in fact or in law or, relative to any prize, inclucial conditions, or fitness. Void where prohibited by la 5. For a list of winners, available after May 4, 1998, se List, c/o PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blyd., Ste	the Affidavit of Eligibility/Release of tance of a prize constitutes winner's consent or advertising and promotional purposes residents except employees of the IDG Games Kali, and their affiliates, subsidiaries, sales promotional agencies, and the immediate ly. Prizes are non-transferable and may not sponsibility. By accepting a prize, winners t IDG Games Media Group, Diamond natatives and employees will have no liability k kind resulting from acceptance, possession, t said parties have neither made nor are in presentation, or guarantee expressed or uding but not limited to, its quality, mechanism.

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GunJam: run low -- i'll cover you home

HiTech: roger that -- p51 closing fast!

GunJam: pull left! PULL LEFT!

GunJam: HiTech!?!

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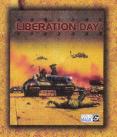
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Worms 2 By Chris Hudak

The Conqueror Worm



Cry havoc, and let slip the worms of war! Flat-bang from the opener movie, it's abundantly clear that Worms 2 is out to kick some ass in a disconcertingly light-

hearted way. With its bright, cartoonish look, brilliant combat-sound effects, causal-virtue physics, and staunchly uneducational playload of gripping, humorous (and utterly pointless) violence, W2 is a streamlined and immensely satisfying single- and multiplayer combat game

that may damn well be the best hotseat PC venture to date.

W2 is a sideview, turn-based strategy game with some real-time elements. Member by member in rotation, teams of heavily armed worms controlled

by one or more players have a set amount of time (usually half a minute or so) to move into position and employ any number of increasingly destructive and indiscriminate weapons in an attempt to obliterate opposing worms.

The game's basic combat mechanics are deceptively simple. Weapons are either directfire affairs (Uzis, shotguns, pistols), indirectdelivery systems that require the player to

eyeball the correct range and angle of descent with windcorrection as a factor (mortars,

bazookas, grenades, short-fuse cluster explosives, and the like), or drop-and-run devices (mines, sticks of dynamite). The rest of W2's arsenal ranges from the purely logistical ropes, girders, drills—to the gratuitous and bizarre, such as exploding livestock, magic

> bullets, and the devastating Holy Hand Grenade (which plays a quick sound byte from Handel's Messiah before blasting out a crater six times the size of its intended target).

W2's simple but very capable physics allow thrown weapons to roll and rebound. Badly aimed grenades bounce

back to land squarely in front of their throwers; ground blasts send dormant land mines clattering downhill to rest and detonate next to extremely surprised and unhappy worms. Even an enemy deeply entrenched in a narrow crevice and impervious to conventional shelling isn't necessarily safe from the Napalm Strike,

> whose payload of jellied, flaming death can dribble and spatter down

> > into the nethermost cracks. W2's wonderfully goofy physics take on an almost billiards-worthy quality as players align precise, windcorrected strikes and attempt to engineer explosions in such a way that the flying corpses take out still more enemies in a domino-effect wormslide.

> > With the option to play with 18 players at one machine in a ranking, tournament-style league setup, creating teams of amusingly named Worms is

half the fun. The game also supports six-



Life and death in a land of cheese,

GAME OF THE MONTH

player games over the Internet or on a LAN.

The various potential battlegrounds are surreal

combinations of terrain and flavor, including such geographic oddities as barren mesas of cheese, ragged islands strewn with assorted Caribbean junk and UXBs of the Gulf War, or Fat Albert-meets-Salvador Dali stretches of rolling hills punctuated by crazily proportioned fire hydrants, tractors, and piping.

Often, by the time somebody wins, there ain't a whole hell of a lot of territory left to claim. Perhaps this is a metaphor for warfare as a whole... But what matters is that lastworm-standing glow of your surviving combatants, jumping for joy on the war-torn ruins around them, shouting "Victory!" in their piping, cartoony voices.



GAMEPLAY: A GETTING STARTED: B GRAPHICS : B

SOUND CHECK: A-



MULTIPLAYER: A

Carnage with character.

DEVELOPER: Team 17 PUBLISHER: MicroProse

800-879-7529 WEB: www.microprose.com

PLATFORM: Win 95 CD REQUIRES: P75, 16MB RAM, 50MB HD,

SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED: P133, 32MB RAM,

▼ Remember Murphy's Law: If a

8x CD-ROM drive STREET PRICE:

thing can go wrong, it will. Don't get silly with the Air Strikes, Banana Bombs, Exploding Sheep, Nukes, or anything else in a situation where you and the enemy are in close proximity. You don't have to hit the enemy squarely to kill him; the blast effect of explosions can inflict damage through obstructing terrain, or it can send a worm just that critical millimeter to one side that will send him plunging into the deadly sea, a mass of land mines, or even into other worms. Sometimes the best attacks are low-tech or

even no-tech: An enemy worm at full strength might theoretically survive even a full-on air strike, but he won't survive being cracked out into the deep blue sea with a baseball bat



Nail him with a machine gun, gangster-style.

April 1998 • PC GAMES



Grand Theft Auto

Civil disobedience

By Daniel Morris

ou're standing in downtown Liberty City, waiting for your employers to give you your assignment for the day-steal a couple of taxicabs and deliver them to a pier across town. Not even blinking, you walk up to the nearest parked taxi and pull the cabbie out. It would be a simple carjacking except that you pause a moment to run over the poor cabbie, and in so doing, score a few extra points.

There are more levels of anti-social criminal behavior in Grand Theft Auto than in most other games combined. You begin as a lowly street crook, jacking cars and causing panic in the streets, and slowly work your way up the

out of your vehicle. Of course, cars take damage, à la Carmageddon, and you don't want to be turning in damaged goods when you boost a car.

The police force doesn't take too kindly to your mowing down and robbing the citizenry. There are quite a few glorious car chases as you flee the Long Arm of the Law, and if you ditch your car to strike out on foot, you can engage them in running shoot-outs worthy of Heat.

All questions of morality aside, GTA is involving for awhile. I'll be

> honest: it's kind of fun yanking motorists from their cars and then grooving to the music on their radios (the game's vivid sound design includes tracks from bands credited as Slumpussy, Da Shootaz, Animal Testing Centre, and Bleeding Stump, though much of it is done by oneman act Craig Conner).

> But despite the original, anarchic premise, there really isn't a lot to it. Thus it suffers from the same weakness as its moral cousin Postal. There are only so many times you can demolish a neighborhood and get thrown in the slammer before it

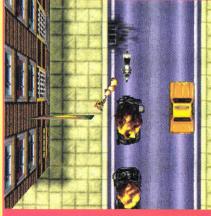
starts to get tiring. Once you've gone joyriding in all the different vehicles, you start wanting the game to move on. It doesn't.



When carjackers go postal.

ladder of a Mafia crime family. Over 200 individual missions present slightly bigger and more difficult assignments each time (from the taxicabs, you'll progress to retrieving tanks, among other things).

Played from a top-down perspective, GTA lays out a massive city with landmarks, bridges, parks, freeways, side alleys...all kinds of interesting stomping grounds for a sociopath. The bread and butter of point-scoring is the successful hijacking and delivery of the 30 vehicle types. From coupes to pickup trucks, vans to school buses, just about anything on wheels will eventually fall prey to your heisting. Each sports its own arcade-style handling characteristics. Weapons such as pistols and flamethrowers add to your homicidal capacity when you hop



Say hello to my little friend!



I fought the law...and the law won

The graphics are vivacious in spirit but generally subpar-it's sometimes hard to tell what's going on when the camera zooms in and out on its own. Network play for up to four allows for a crime wave as hoodlums compete to finish the mob boss' assignment first, but it doesn't do much to allay the lack of gameplay depth.

Grand Theft Auto is a gleefully amoral joyride for two hours. But don't spend the money unless carjackings and car chases can keep you entertained for days on end.



Proof that anarchic glee is short-lived.

DEVELOPER: DMA Design ASC Games PUBLISHER: WFR. www.ascgames.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD

REQUIRES: 486 DX4/100, 16MB RAM, 80MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive

RECOMMENDED: P100 STREET PRICE: \$50

▼ Take advantage of chop shops to change a stolen car's color and license plates and throw the police off your trail. V Occasionally you'll see a little box with the word HAYULP! on it. Ram it to get a hint. ▼ Punch crates to find power-ups like the Get Out of Jail Free Card and the Police Bribe. ▼ The F7 key calls up your last pager message, in case you forgot any particulars of your latest assignment.

Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith

Got your jumping boots on?

By Steve Klett



eating Jedi Knight three days after installing it was bittersweet. On the one hand, I enjoyed an unparalleled single-player gaming experience that absorbed me and made me forget about such trivial things as eating, sleeping, and work. On the other hand, it was over all too soon. Thankfully, LucasArts seems to have anticipated the latter sentiment and has quickly released JK's first expansion disc: Mysteries

Mysteries takes place five years after Kyle Katarn's victory over the Dark Jedi-or his seduction by the Dark Side, depending on how vou played. You start out playing as Kyleretaining the mastery of the Force you earned in IK-for the first few mis-

sions. Then, when Kyle leaves to pursue some "unfinished business," you assume the role of Mara Jade. elements. In contrast, Mysteries seems rushed in this regard, never really laving out who the Sith are and what the nature of their power is. (Perhaps LucasArts assumed everyone's read the books.)

JK's expository FMV sequences between levels have been replaced with rough game AVIs whose cheesy voiceovers don't tell ya a whole lot. They were also choppy on, yup, a PII 300 with a 20x CD-ROM drive.

But hey, there are plenty of new toys to play with, including a Sniper Scope that's a lot of fun (and very, very, useful); some heavy-duty Blaster Cannons you can take a seat in to mow down Imperial troopers; heat-seeking

Rail Detonators; and a

Heavy Blaster Pistol. You also get five new Force powers: Push, Chain Lightning, Lightsaber Throw, Projection (Jedi's version of the Holoduke), and Far Sight.

Over the course of the 14 single-player missions, which range from a besieged Rebel base to a Wampa-invested swamp, you'll encounter some 20 new enemies. New creatures include assassin and torture droids, pirate raiders, Vornskrs, and Scout Troopers.

As with JK, Mysteries' levels are vast and varied. Unlike JK, Mysteries' levels are needlessly frustrating. A good deal of the challenge lies in searching for a hidden grate, door, or switch. I often found myself running around with the map on, looking for pathways the map could see and I couldn't—that's not much fun. The level designers also seem to have been influenced by games like Turok and Tomb Raider: There's lots and lots of jumping. I would rather have seen more challenge in combat and less in environment.

Still, Mysteries manages to engross: Once again I lost sleep and forgot to eat, and the way you need to beat the game is really very clever



The Saber Throw is deadly in hallwaysand perhaps a new Olympic sport?

(and boy, will you feel a bit thick when you finally figure it out). And when you throw in the four new multiplayer classes and fifteen new multiplayer levels, it's hard not to give Mysteries a strong recommendation.



LucasArts PHRIISHER: 800-985-8227 www.lucasarts.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD

P90, 16MB RAM, 48MB HD, REQUIRES: 2x CD-ROM drive

P166, 32MB RAM, 3D card, 4x CD-ROM drive

STREET PRICE:

▼ Forget jumping: The start of Mission 12 is all about Persuasion, baby. ▼ Saber Throw is very handy from Mission 12 on, Lure creatures to the foot of staircases or ramps (which they seem to have trouble moving up and down), and then hit them with the saber from far away. V Force Pull is a Light Jedi's best friend. Vuse the overhead map to find hidden corridors and secrets.

Must-have Force Powers: Force Jump (maxed out), Sight, Pull, Health, Persuasion, and Saber Throw. ▼ Violence isn't always

the answer: Trust your feelings.

A former Jedi-in-training for the Empire, Mara switched over to the Rebellion when she learned of Kyle's skills with the Force—she wanted to learn from the best. She undertakes a series of missions for the New Republicincluding an encounter with a Jabba-the-Hut wannabe-and then embarks on a journey to find Kyle, who has dropped out of touch. Her search comes to a climax in the bowels of an extremely "mysterious" Sith temple. Once again, you'll have a choice to make...

Luke vs. Darth in a deathmatch...can it get

any better than that?

Even after you've finished the game, the Sith are still exactly that—mysterious. Jedi Knight's story was one of the game's strongest Miller----Did

you hear that?

ORTEGA----Yeah...

there's something back there ...

Miller---Ortega...

ORTEGA!

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KESMAI STUDIOS



Nightmare Creatures The ol' hack-and-slash





One shot from your pistol would have finished him off...

t last! I've been waiting for years for computer-game geneticists to meld a Doom-like environment with 3D fighting game dynamics. BioForge was a nice start; Tomb Raider had the moves and the feel, but not the actual fisticuffs.

This grisly action/adventure-cum-beat-'em-up adds a splendidly visceral component to the Tomb Raider canon. As either the staff-wielding monk Ignatius or swordsperson Nadia, you'll scour the foggy back-alleys of 19th-century London from a third-person perspective in search of one Adam Crowley. This apparent refugee from Scooby Doo has been

meddling with dead things...and strewn them liberally across your path. He built 'em, and you get to take 'em apart in gory fighting sequences. An array of power-ups will let you, among other things, set your enemies ablaze, freeze them, stun them, confuse them, or turn them against each other.

I'm grateful for a realistic-looking female character, and for enemies who can dodge effectively. And I found myself constantly impressed by small, thoughtful touches—some with a "Yeeeechh!" quality. Crowley himself sometimes appears out of the mist to lure you deeper into the game.

This Nightmare did seem on the easy side after a few nights, I'd hacked my way through 13 of the 16 levels. Tactics should have mattered more: you can beat virtually any monster by getting the drop on it and maintaining a rain of blows. Enhancements from the console version—3D accelerator support and the occa-

sional onscreen instruction in special moves are rather basic, and there's no multiplay.

But all that means is that a good game could've been even better. —Peter Olafson



X-Men: The Ravages of Apocalypse

Quake dudes in tights

hile comic books in recent years have seemed to specialize in killing off established superheroes, computer games are beginning to bring them back. For the first time since the early '90s, a major superhero RPG-MicroProse's Guardians—is in the works. And for the first time since the late '80s, the Men in Tights are the centerpiece of an action

The Storm clone uses weather

game. It isn't exactly super, but it's not bad.

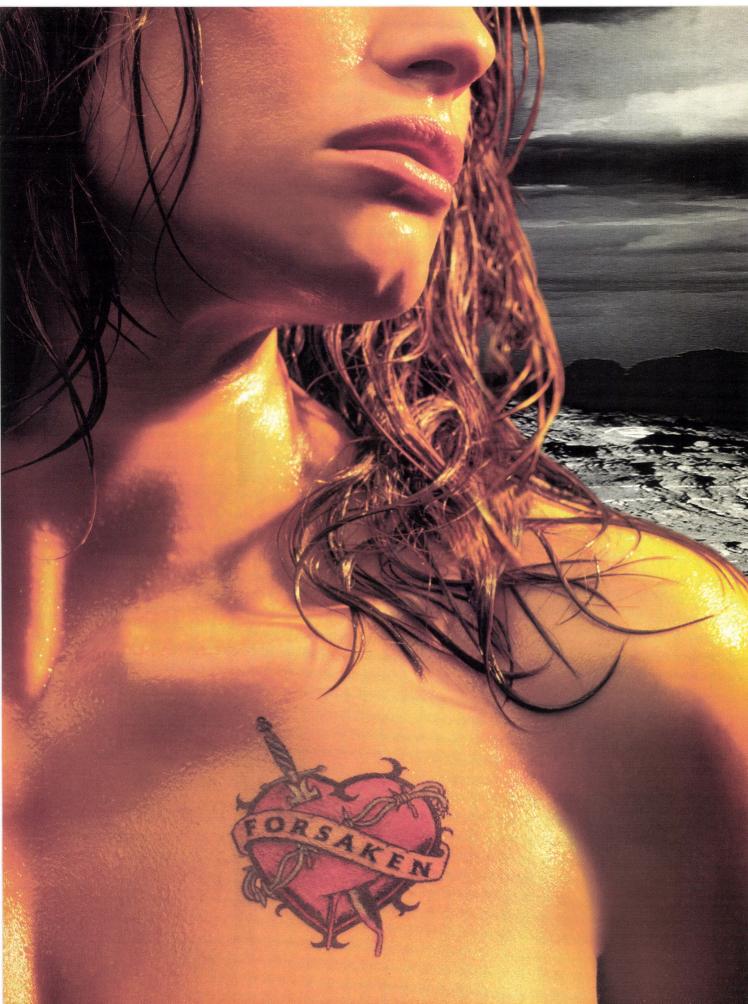
X-Men: The Ravages of Apocalypse is a total conversion of the original Quake-it uses the engine and replaces virtually everything else, casting you not as an X-Men character, but as a creation of archvillain Magneto. In the course of 14 levels (arranged in two episodes), you'll do the usual Quake button-pushing and ammotrampling, hack a path though an army of X-Men clones (including fan favorites Wolverine, Rogue, and Gambit), and collect the scattered pieces of super-weapons necessary for victory.

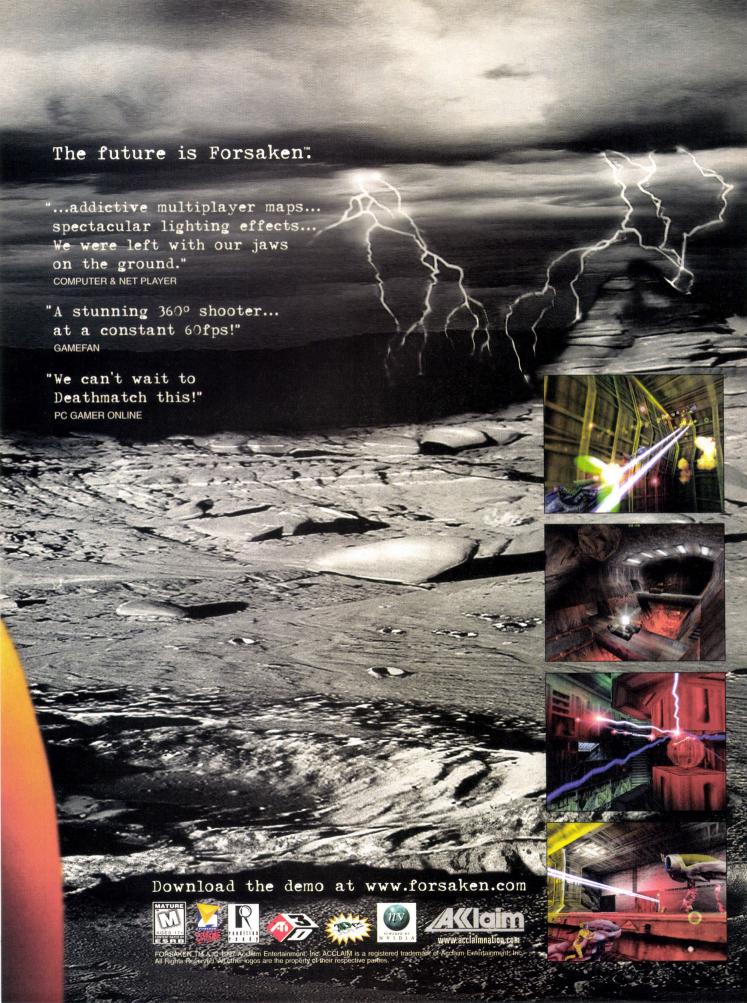
The fun is in the details. Your morphing weapons include a raging flamethrower that reduces enemies to tottering, ember-flecked skeletons (and the Iceman clone to a puddle). If you stand near pipes, you can hear the thrumming of water. The X-Men clones are close approximations of the 2D ink X-Men, especially in the vivid GLQuake version. And the angular level design, while initially unimpressive, improves by the middle of the first episode.

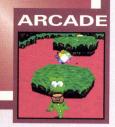
On the other hand, I was disappointed that you can only play an X-Men character in the

four multiplayer levels. And I was surprised Ravages doesn't integrate story into the game proper. (After all, story is a strength of good comics.) X-Men is a straight Quake bash-minus the gibs and intimidating monsters—with no linking animations or text and no sense of where you are. -Peter Olafson









Croc

Good, clean fun

fter wondering if I'd suddenly switched on a Saturday morning cartoon, I was initially worried about Croc. The game's saccharine setup had me nervous—you play as the title character, an energetic and good-natured bipedal crocodile on a mission



to save the friendly little Gobbos (furry, Tribble-like things) from the evil Baron Dante. Does that sound like a recipe for fun to your average jaded gamer?

It is—for awhile, anyway. This remarkably simple arcade game harkens back to the days

when interactive entertainment's bread and butter were Sonic the Hedgehog and Mario, when floating multicolored crystals were nabbed for points, and your goal was to rescue cute little critters from cages. And it's all in glorious 3D.

You steer Croc through five stages of the game world, beginning in a volcanic lava level and advancing through over 40 levels of forest, glacier, mountain, and even underwater play. There are nine bosses to overcome, as well as dozens of peculiar evil creatures that don't mind snapping their jaws into you.

Running and jumping are just about all the commands you need to navigate the world, and surprisingly, the fun lasts for a good long while. Alas, Croc does start to bog down after the first few stages, and it's tough to work up the enthusiasm to see it through to the end.

The bosses are just big creepy guys; the main one, Baron Dante, is a bipedal frog wearing medieval armor. Defeating them is a matter of using the Tail-Snipe, which allows Croc to



shoot projectiles from his tail after picking up power-ups.

But fine graphics and bouncy music should keep younger gamers entertained for a long time. And in a market where good, clean fun is getting harder to find, Croc should be included on a parent's list.

—Daniel Morris



Pandemonium 2

fter last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the *PC Games* staff picked its sleepers from the show. Mine was easy: Pandemonium 2's audacious early version held the promise of a mind-blowing game—more than just "more of same" of the first installment.

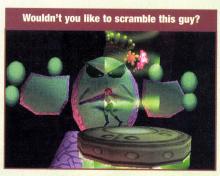
Did it pay off? Well, yes, but not in spades. P2 is probably one of the best ports of a true platform game, but it doesn't go as far beyond standard platformer fare as I'd hoped, particularly in gameplay. (There's no multiplay, for example.) You get the usual conventions: jumpflip, grab treasure coins, stomp on enemies, and so on. All pretty tough and engaging, but all very PlayStation, really.

Decent PlayStation, though. P2 environments are simply some of the coolest ever to come from the platform genre. Trippy graphics, camera angles, and path design make the exploration addictive. I thought I'd combed the first level thoroughly, only to discover I'd nailed just 43 percent of the treasure. The missing loot proved to be in some

This is your Game on Drugs

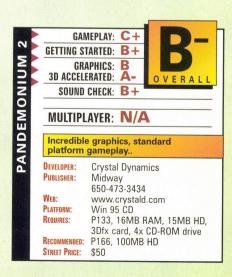
wild places—this game doesn't stick you on a railed path and leave you there.

It's also graphically astonishing, with wild, color-drenched, Dali-esque environments like nothing you've ever seen in a game. Unfortunately, the free camera-movement and intricate, wide-angle environments sometimes leave out any sense of engagement with the two characters, Nikki and Fargus (who's back from the first game). When you do get into immersive sequences, the amazing camera work, 3Dfx acceleration, and sheer color make for a superior experience.



If you don't have a console but want to know what it's like, this is absolutely the game you want. But it's not going to compete with a Jedi Knight that wields superb graphics and totally immersive action, and it's not going to make you ditch your N64 or PlayStation, either.

—Don St. John



By Don St. John

A mighty leap across the decades



'm really 19, you know. Now, that's not what my driver's license says. That unworthy document shows something closer to twice that age, in fact. Nonetheless, in my truest thoughts, I'm back in college circa 1980, watching dormmates such as Ed Cafasso battle back waves of attackers in Galaga and Artie Lewis repel the enemy forces in Space Invaders, or I'm dial-twisting through the levels in Tempest.

Which is why the release of Frogger warms the heart of this old arcade quarter-pumper. Frogger was a mainstay of my slice runs to Captain Nemo's Pizza in Boston's Kenmore Square, and it's great to see that it's hopped across the decades in fine style. You even get the briefest glimpse at the boot-up of the old 2D arcade interface before it all morphs into modern, accelerator-friendly (if you have one)





3D. As gap-bridging goes, it's a nice start.

In truth, Hasbro would've had to screw up big-time to take the elemental fun out of Frogger, and they haven't. They were even smart enough to start you out at what they call the "Retro Level." That's right: hopping across the same highway/river combo that greeted you in the original,

dodging cars, trucks, and crocodiles. Of course, it all seems easy and familiar until you start jumping—then it's trickier than it looks or you remembered.

Frogger looks good—taking its cues from the platform-game genre it naturally belongs to—in an overhead-3D play perspective. As for difficulty, if you played this in the old days, you know how many quarters it took to master Frogger. It was always tougher than it seemed, and even at the easiest level, the speed made gauging distances and movement surprisingly hard. I played on a very responsive PII 300, and the glitchless play still belied the fact that making the jumps onto moving logs, whirling gears, and lily pads could be tough [or Don's fingers aren't as nimble as when he was 19—Ed.].

Frogger's other serious concession to modern times is head-to-head play in Frogger Race via modem, network, or the Internet (on Microsoft's Zone); this breaks up the screen into halves or quarters and challenges you to finish a level first. There are also added touches like the Super Jump, the Power Croak (useful against enemies such as the crocodiles), and the Heat-seeking Tongue (ahem).

I did keep hitting a crash bug in 3Dfx play that even the patch at **www.frogger.com** didn't fix. And, despite the high amusement quotient, at times I longed for some sustained action of the kill-or-be-killed sort. Frogger leans furthest toward the family-around-the-console-machine style of platform game. Hasbro has tagged this



Don't see many frogs up here, eh?

title for its traditional audience, no question.

Still, there's no denying Frogger's playful essence. Not for the Frogger player are the frustrations of getting constantly fragged in a multiplayer Quake II game because of lag, or the hopelessly hard puzzles of Riven. When you screw up in this game, the frustration is much more simple—you know you coulda made that jump, and by God, you're headed right back to try it again with a light heart. Every game ought to be that fun, y'know?





Tanarus

Log on, hop in, and blast 'em!

By Don St. John

f online games are going to make the dent in gamer consciousness that most think they can, they'll have to be smart. You need something that can hook new players while satisfying regulars—simple enough to work across a 28.8 modem while complex enough to be a fun play.

Tanarus fits the bill pretty well. Sony's tank-combat game has the exciting pace of an arcade tank game (think Tokyo Wars for arcade denizens), an easy connection setup, and a challenge level that ensures that just jumping in means you're going to get your turrets blown right off. It already has a solid audience from its extended free beta test. For the non-Tanarus player, you can still play for free if you're willing to be restricted to one tank with a preset configuration and practice arenas only (which is actually a good idea until you get used to tank handling and

whole lot. Each tank can sport three configurations that you can change back at your home base.

What keeps this from being a limitation is that Tanarus practically demands that you play as a team. Hook up with as many as four other tanks, and you have plenty of options to lay down some good strategy. It's this aspect of the game that makes playing it so enjoyable: You can really coordinate your actions beautifully. The message system allows for open or private communication, so talking on the fly is no problem. When you get in sync with your teammates, it's a smooth, pleasurable playing experience.

Run out of sync, though, and you'll have two possible problems to solve: The trickier one (which can lead right to the other, more obvious problem—getting wasted by the enemy) is power management. Tanarus tanks run on battery power, with recon-station charging units at your home base and scattered around the arena. If your squad captures one, you can recharge out in the field—but if you come in range of an enemyheld unit (or the enemy bases), they suck your power down

faster than usual. Plus, you're using up battery reserves just by moving and firing weapons. On your own, you're not going to have much luck staying powered up, grabbing charge pods, and wasting the other guy.

The prebuilt arenas tend toward uncomplicated, open city spaces, though the retail version includes a map builder. Latency seems not to be a problem over a 33.6 modem, and I experienced only the very occasional tank jump.

The \$10-a-month pop for Tanarus is mitigated by a one-month free startup offer. Pure adrenaline junkies might do better with the likes of Quake II, but for an experience loaded with basic gameplay elements underlined with

Was destroyed by acots for

Wa

deceptively tough play handling and strategy, Tanarus is a solid choice. This is one \$10-amonth deal that doesn't sound so bad.



maneuvering). Buying the \$19.95 retail version also opens some very basic single-player training levels for further practice.

With this full-blown online version, you get more than your share of quick mayhem. At your disposal are five tanks of different speeds and maneuverability. (Players who tried out the beta will find one new model, the fast MagRider.) Each tank has seven bays to take anything from all-out missile-based weaponry through mines to scanning add-ons to straight defensive shielding. Be warned, though: many of the functions take up more than one bay, so seven doesn't add up to a



MULTIPLAYER: B+

Surprisingly sophisticated arcade tank warfare.

Publisher: Sony Interactive 888-426-3702
WEB: www.tanarus.com

PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P120, 16MB RAM, 30MB HD,
4x CD-ROM drive, 28.8 modem

RECOMMENDED: P133, 32MB RAM, 3Dfx card, 33.6 modem, joystick
STREET PRICE: \$20 retail CD; \$10/mo.

subscription

TIPS Interest and ling is the difference between simple and sophisticated play. You almost never want to be firing in the direction you're traveling. In use the power enhancements in as many configurations as you can. Offensive tanks benefit from the Supercharger, while scouts and defensive tanks should add a Power Receiver. The Stealth module is great—nobody can find you unless they're using Doppler radar, and the power drain is minimal. (Chameleon tanks have Stealth built in.) Newbies may want to fall back on sniping, especially in tandem with a teammate acting as a decoy. Besides Stealth, Smoke (which feigns damage) is a great tool for sucking in enemies, while the Sharpshooter module lets you

double the range of your lasers

Descent to Undermountain

Descent does D&D

ome years ago, in the carefree days before children and mortgage payments, I was introduced to a woman at a party. She was cute in a sort of earthy way-with a mocking spirit-and we seemed to be hitting it off until I spilled some wine. By the time I came back, the geometry of the party had somehow altered, and I was never to find my way back to her side.

It wasn't until a couple of years later that I thought to ask the hostess for the girl's number. And it was the strangest thing: I didn't remember her. When she came to greet me, I actually craned my neck around the door frame in search of someone semifamiliar. I had the lurking suspicion that I was fobbed off on a younger sibling.

What does this incipient short story have to do with DTU? Quite a lot, actually. This singlecharacter role-player came with a sense of déjà vu. Once again, I have the lurking suspicion that I somehow got stuck with a little sister.

The older sister is Descent, DTU adapts the core technology from Parallax's vertigoinducing 1995 shoot-'em-up to the AD&D RPG format—with results that amount to an interesting mistake.

These monsters aren't as scary as they look.

As the would-be savior of the city of Waterdeep (the Forgotten Realms burg that last appeared in SSI's Eye of the Beholder), you've been enlisted to stopper a rising tide of trouble from the huge dungeon of the title. In the sur**By Peter Olafson**

face city—a single pointand-click screen-you'll be dispatched on 25-plus missions by a local lord, shake your booty in the market, or hang out at The Yawning Portal tavern. Here, in pixelated 3D, you can shoot the breeze with a motley assortment of adventurers before descending into the depths in first-person.

Most of the trouble comes from the game. The monsters are pussycats. The ones that don't stand moping in a corner simply make beelines for you, and they're so slow to respond that, even when they mobbed

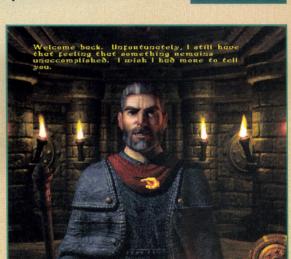
me, they sometimes didn't even get a blow in before I'd killed all of them. A game without AI is a game without darkness. I didn't look over my shoulder even once.

And realism? There's no gravity: dead monsters hang suspended in mid-air, and if you push a bench off a ledge, it exhibits the same weightlessness. When I tried to open a cell door, the game instantly crashed to the desk-

> top. (The v. 1.1 patch helped, but a similar thing happened, post-patch, in the fifth mission.) The text-pithy and plentiful in the fashion of Pool of Radiance—sometimes refers to things that don't exist in the game. (You say there's a rest area over there? Suuuurre there is.)

I don't mind the graphics-rough-hewn even in hi-res mode—as they're appropriate to the ancient places you're exploring. But

the graininess gets downright ugly when you talk to a character and the screen changes to black-and-white. While it has some nice vistas, DTU doesn't take advantage of Descent's greatest asset: It made people happily dizzy. And the use of teleports everywhere removes a sense of depth and scale from the environment.



Khelben Blackstaff supplies info on your missions.

ROLE PLAY

At the same time, though, little sisters may have charms of their own, and I do see elements of a potentially decent game: multiple ways of solving problems, some sly level design...and thrilling music. These sounds regularly sent chills down my back, but like the game proper, rarely delivered.



MULTIPLAYER: N/A

A realm best left forgotten.

PUBLISHER: Interplay 800-468-3775 WEB: www.interplay.com PLATFORM: DOS 6.2/Win 95 CD

P90, 32MB RAM, 25MB HD, RECUIRES: 1MB SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive

P150, 228MB HD

STREET PRICE:

The quest to retrieve a scarab from a vast Egyptian-style tomb is a particularly tough nut. The choke points all hang on well-concealed switches, secret doors, and a clever layout that suggests you're done when you're not. The trickiest part is at the end: The trigger to open the final set of stairs can be found in a column near the door to the room with the giant ankh. (Don't use the portal in the ankh just yet; it kicks you back to the tomb's front door.)



Front Page Sports: Ski Raci Les all downhill from here By Daniel Mo

By Daniel Morris

very four years, during the Winter Olympiad, Americans become ambitious about skiing. The bunny slopes we traditionally tread suddenly look like child's play.

That's why Sierra has chosen the season of Nagano to unveil Front Page Sports: Ski Racing, the PC's only ski-racing sim. Now those of us who can barely manage the lift up the slope can try our hands at the Super-G.

The slalom, giant slalom, Super-G, and downhill events are re-created here, along with an overall event that incorporates performance in each individual type of race. You can race on your own in single events, as part of a oneplayer competitive season, or against other players via hotseat, Sierra's name for multiplay.



Hold steady on the jumps and try to land as soft as a feather.

The five real-world slopes vary in difficulty, from the relative straight shot of Aspen to the sidewinding hell of Val d'Isere, via Mt. Bachelor, Garmisch, and Whistler. Luckily, practice runs give you a familiarity with each slope. There's also help from Picabo Street, America's favorite and only celebrity skier, whom Sierra has tapped for video instruction segments.

Begin a competitive season by creating a skier and choosing a customized racing outfit, colors, and corporate sponsors. Some tactical know-how becomes necessary when you pick your boots and skis for each race. Different gear is tailored for certain events. It's worth spending time reading through the equipment profiles for pre-race comparative analysis.

Then it's to the gate. The actual physical gameplay of Ski Racing is very simple.

It's not any more complicated than steer left, steer right, tuck, stand, and occasionally tooling with pre-jump and jumping routines. The trick is in developing precise control of every movement. Sloppy, arcade-style movements will quickly send you sliding face-first down the mountain. This game is all touch; you need the grace of a fighter pilot when you make corrections with your joystick.

This is also one of the first non-combat games to really make splendid use of force-feedback technology. The stick rolls and jostles and bumps as your skis match the contours of the slope, and it goes dead for the moment that you're airborne on a jump—before shuddering as you come back down and fight to retain your stance.

Graphically, Ski Racing is more than serviceable. 3Dfx acceleration adds nice cloud and snowpack detail to the already crisp 3D animations of the skier. Unfortunately, there's just not much to look at. It's basically an expanse of white powder, some flags, some borders, and the occasional finish line. In hotseat play, it gets really boring just watching.

Hotseat at one machine is the only multiplayer option available. It's one of a few things about this game that hint at a rush to ship the title for the Nagano deadline. Other noticeable flaws include an aggravating propensity for hang-ups and a chronic tendency for black lines to mar some of the





Whoa! This isn't a sport for power-sliding.

camera views (particularly noticeable and irritating at the opening gate).

These flaws aside, FPS: Ski Racing is a unique and entertaining game that offers a lot of reward for aficionados of this fast, furious sport. And with its great music and sound design, it's never a bore to challenge these slopes.



WFR: www.sierra.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 55MB HD.

4x CD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM, 3Dfx card

STREET PRICE:

Resist making "breakneck-speed" puns about recently deceased politicians. ▼ Use your pre-jump button on the downhill as your skis begin their upturn on a jump. The instant before you leave the ground, use the jump button to explode upward from the pre-jump crouch, and you'll get much more distance and balance. ▼ Never panic at the sight of an oncoming flag in the Super-G. They look like you're going to hit them immediately, so you're tempted to veer. This will only put you on your butt. Make gentle corrections. ▼ It's not advisable to remain in your tuck the entire length of a downhill run. You'll build up too much speed, particularly in the corners of the twistier slopes. Pull out of your crouch when you start to enter a turn at more than sixty miles per hour.

The Deeper Dungeons

More evil



Dungeon Keeper is a charming strategy game whose novel concept helped it win our 1997 Editors' Choice Award for real-time strategy. But it had two weak points:

It was too short, and its AI needed work. This mission disc shores up those gaps solidly.

In a nutshell, you use battalions of Imps to build a dungeon that attracts a high quality of monster, try to keep your horde happy and hardy, and, at length, fend off the goodygoodies (and fellow baddy-baddies) who try to wrest it from you.

Deeper Dungeons consists of 30 new levels—15 each of single- and multiplayer (still just LAN and serial play). They're tough-but-fair levels that appear aimed at graduates of the original. The first I tried was a real struggle. The second...well, there were several seconds (you can play any level you choose).



Partly, that's a function of the innate difficulty of the tasks you've been set. (The Avatar from Dungeon Keeper has been resurrected.) But it's also the result of a significant upgrade in the AI. The sense I sometimes got in DK of getting away with something has been replaced by an impression of a human-like computer player who's fast off the mark and careful with resources (if still somewhat blunt in approach and aimless in construction).

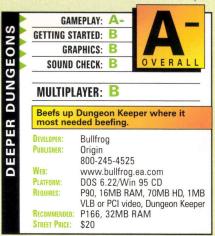
I wish they'd included a proper front end instead of a simple menu, and I miss the narrator's level-by-level litany of the syrupy excesses of the surface world. While the box touts "new dungeon graphics," I didn't see anything



worth bragging about. And Bullfrog should've included much of this in the original, rather than making you pop for another \$20 later on.

But overall, it's \$20 well spent: This is Dungeon Keeper as it should've been. Evil's *great*.

-Peter Olafson



Civ II: Fantastic Worlds Dragon sighted at nine o'clock

ivilization has proven to be as much a resource for MicroProse as 19th-century joke books are for Milton Berle. We've gone through Civ, Civ II, CivNet I and II, and various Civ II scenario discs—including the latest, Fantastic Worlds.

The title stems from 11 fantasy and sci-fi scenarios that MicroProse designed especially for this add-on. (You also get eight posted on the Net by Civ II players.) To their credit, the scenarios are a very diverse group. Midgard lets you rule a realm in the Nordic mythos;



Samurai pits you, a clan ruler, against three other would-be emperors. There are also scenarios based on Master of Magic, Master of Orion, and X-COM, though these understandably lack the battle graphics and detailed play of the originals.

None of the scenarios start from a randomized game's beginning: FW's storylines are joined in progress. Individual sides in each scenario possess more territory, or military units, buildings, or research. The fun lies in figuring out how to overcome one's disadvantages and maximizing potential, while keeping everybody from kicking the living cookie dough out of you.

The wonders, advancements, buildings, governments, and so on have been renamed and sometimes altered drastically for specific scenarios. While in-game help usually supplies excellent background, there's no data provided on terrain types and special resources. This is a problem in scenarios like Mars Now!, where the entire landscape has been reconfigured and filled with new objects

replacing coal, whales, and such. The only way to find out what effect crystals or test tubes have on cities is to start one up.

FW also includes building tools that allow you to create your own scenarios, handled through a series of editing interfaces and a macro language that simplify the process as much as possible. But it's still tricky: this is a very elaborate game.

—Barry Brenesal



Command System:
An innovative menu system integrates troop and resource management for full control from within your anti-grav vehicle.

Scrap/Pilot Meters:
Both are a resource. Gather Scrap for your unit-building Factories; build Barracks to add to your supply of pilots.

Solar Array:

The Solar Array provides power to your Factories, Gun Towers and other energyintensive units.

Scavenger:

Send your Scavenger to collect valuable Scrap. Gather from scrapfields or destroyed units on the battlefield.



Actual Screenshot.



Gun Tower:

This devastating, long-range defensive unit is powered by the vulnerable Solar Array.

3-D Radar:

A topographical 3-D radar displays your base location, unit placement, field of vision and enemy position.

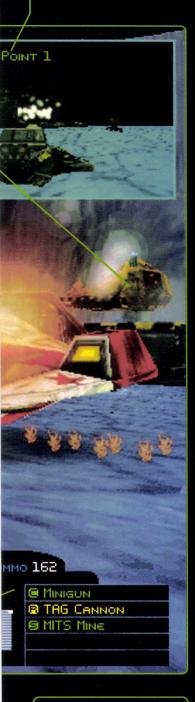
Grizzly Tank:Configure a Grizzly, the key American tank, right on the battlefield.

Weaponry: Spend resources to reconfigure your vehicle's weaponry on-the-fly in the midst of battle.

ACTIVISION®

Nav Beacon Camera:

Set up way-point navigation beacons along the battlezone to stage attacks or for surveillance purposes.



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to the Front Lines.

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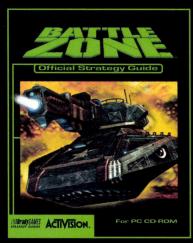
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Multiplayer: Wage multiplayer battles in full Strategy mode over LAN, modem or Internet, or

up to eight-player battles in Deathmatch mode.



Take Strategy to the Front Lines.

www.activision.com www.bradygames.com



Caesar's Palace

All bets are off

nterplay's release of two nearly identical gambling games (the other being Beat the House 2, reviewed last issue) within a month of each other seems plain dumb, but it's evident that each makes up for the other's flaws.

Caesar's Palace attempts to re-create the feel of playing at that particular casino, right down to those gambling instructional videos on the Hotel Channel. You have five gaming choices: slots, blackjack, craps, roulette, or video poker, just like in BTH2.

The frenetic pace of casino play is captured at the blackjack table by the limited amount of time you have to make

decisions. The dealer offers more than "Bets, please," but the interface is a bit more confusing than BTH2's. The slots offer decent animation but aren't compelling. As for the other games: Nice graphics, adequate realism.

Those with access to a LAN can play with up to eight players. Multiplay aside, if you'd rather learn how to win at gambling than merely get slightly nicer graphics, BTH2's a safer bet.

-Shane Mooney



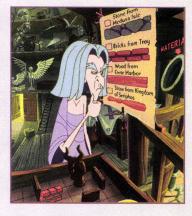
Hades' Challenge

Cheaper than a baby-sitter

dmit it, you like Disney films. No surprise that a game turns up based on the recent *Hercules* release. With the exception of Danny DeVito, the original voice cast is back in this continuation of the original story. Hercules is busy doing heroic deeds, so the gods turn to you with a series of tasks.

These educational challenges

(it's Disney, remember?) range from trapping the Minotaur by building a maze, to figuring out how to use the Trojan Horse to end the Trojan War. At the end of every challenge, Hades (James Woods as Hades: "No



pops up with a series of questions to see what you've learned. The graphics are impressive, and Phil, your guide, is a laugh a minute. ("The Minotaur just ate 20 people; I guess he likes Greek food.") Geared for the typical Disney audience, Hades is still a kick.

—Danny W. Lam

PUBLISHER: Disney
Interactive
800-900-9234
WEB: www.disney
interactive.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
STREET PRICE: \$30



Microshaft Winblows 98

Ooo...upgrade, upgrade!

hey say you know you're appreciated when they start making fun of you. Well, if that's true, then the guys at Palladium must really appreciate Bill Gates. The folks who gave us Pyst and The X-Fools are at it again with a barbed shot at Windows 95. Don't even bother with the Start button (or as one of the random messages labels it, "Start or we'll hurt you"), because you'll get nowhere.

Click on icons to play various games like Win Bill Gates' Money with Steve Jobs as your host. Spy on the activities of Microsoft employees



with the Campus Cam. Feed and nurture a Billagotchi, or go exploring in the Reject Bin, which contains stuff that didn't quite make the grade (Naughty Net Nanny? Hmmm...). Just remember to set your display to 256 colors and 640-by-480 because it doesn't like anything else, then get ready for a few good chuckles.

—Danny W. Lam



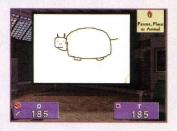
Pictionary

more heroes, get it?")

Draw, baby, draw!

ircle...er...cow. Ummm...
Newt Gingrich. The classic board game
Pictionary is now on the PC. For those of you who've been hiding under rocks, Pictionary involves drawing pictures and then having others guess what they are. The original game had you advancing pieces on a board, the PC version has you fighting for points. The faster you can I.D. a picture, the more points you get.

You can play with two or three people, in two teams, over the modem, on Microsoft's Zone, or guess at the computer drawings in



single-player mode. Overall, it looks clean enough, but I'm not going to skip dinner for this. How the hell do you draw with a mouse (which is your only real option)? My circles looked like squares, and drawing human body parts can prove to be a humiliating experience. But hey, I guess you save on paper. (And by the way, that's supposed to be a pig.) —Danny W. Lam





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3D Performance Comparison - ZD 3D Winbench9

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STB Velocity 128		302
	458	
Diamond Viper 330		
	438	
Diamond Monster 3D		
385		
Hercules Stringray 128		
375		
Matrox Mystique 220 / Matrox M3D		
252		
Matrox Millenium II		
91.7		
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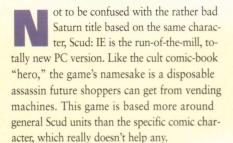
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Scud: Industrial Evolution

Everybody's John Woo fighting



The single-player game consists of 21 levels, with environments from industrial-style buildings and hospitals to desert scenes. You navigate the overhead maps, blowing up bad things while trying to complete a mission (usually finding some strange creature and getting it to the exit). The graphics are small, sharply rendered, and very clean. Annoyingly, your inventory/vital-statistics display takes up about a third of the screen, and the power-up-dropping spacecraft obstruct far too much of your view as they fly overhead.

Level design is very simple—they don't actually seem to go anywhere. You'll get the distinct impression that the focus was on multiplay.

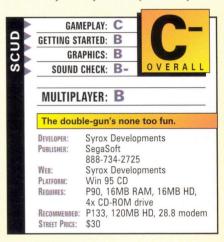
On that note, Scud supports up to 16 players via LAN or the Net, and an 8-player game tested on HEAT ran remarkably well. It's just deathmatching, but given that neither Mageslayer nor Take No Prisoners plays very well online (though the sadly underrated Machine Hunter is quite good), overhead-shooter fans will like the smooth action. Control is decent,





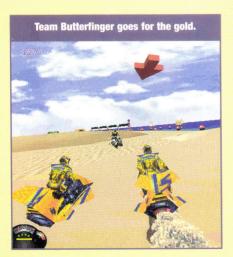
though at times annoying—especially because you can't strafe without moving forward first.

Overall, Scud isn't worth much, but then it probably won't cost much. That and the remarkably stable Net play are about the only reasons to pick it up. —Jason D'Aprile



Jet Moto

rom Sony's PlayStation port factory comes Jet Moto for the PC, and it's a resoundingly average conversion riding the 3D-acceleration train as its sole redeeming grace. There's really not much more to do than rev up your hoverbike and slide through 10 marginally interesting tracks, just like in its console incarnation.



Racing for your choice of Butterfinger or Mountain Dew sponsors, and zooming past billboard advertisements for Nestle Crunch and other assorted hawkers, it's a bit dispiriting to think that banal 1990s corporate schmaltz will still infest the sporting—and gaming—world of the far future. Those distractions aside, the game's graphics are appealingly arcade-style, and Sony's attractive sound design takes full advantage of PC speakers.

Developer SingleTrac made every effort to dress up this threadbare port with anything it could, notably the inclusion of 14 racer characters with comic book–style bio and background info. These laughable guys and gals are even more absurdly presented than the bio file on the back of a G.I. Joe toy. It's enough to make anyone over the age of 10 chuckle.

That said, Jet Moto isn't a bad idea as a game to pick up for the 10-year-old who's tiring of Pole Position on your Microsoft Return of Arcade CD. As I reviewed this game, a pair of very young cousins visited me and spent two hours playing Jet Moto, as happy as could be.

Other ports in a storm

Networkable for up to 14 players, it's also a diverting multiplayer possibility for the very young and/or very unambitious gamers.

But given the wealth of 3D-accelerated racing titles on the market, Jet Moto shouldn't be in the race. It's too shallow and uninspired to hold any serious PC racer's attention for long.

-Daniel Morris



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End Game



Add-on packs, game compilations, budget buys, and loads of other gaming paraphernalia hit the stores each month. Here's where you can go to find a quick indication of whether they're worth your dollar. Some are underhyped jewels, others aren't—but they're all available now.

t *PC Games*, we pretty much disagree about everything. Rob founded a religion based on Quake II. I liked it better when it was still simple GLQuake. Steve liked Conquest Earth. I'm still looking around for a curb to scrape it off my shoe. I thought Carmageddon was a dream machine. George intentionally parked it on the bad side of town with the keys in the ignition.

Which is all a wordy way of saying that, despite what you may have read previously in these pages about Carmageddon, Interplay's Splat Pack add-on is a godlike display of homicidal automotive chaos that almost surpasses the original. You get 20 new tracks (huge and terrifying), 15 vehicles (with the accent on speed), 9 additional environments (deep and rich), a transformative 3Dfx patch, and the same joyful (albeit demented) redistribution of body parts. Priceless. Hey, Georgeget away from my car with that

sledgehammer! (Interplay; www.interplay. com; \$20) \blacktriangle -

Life Kit #1 for Creatures—the most adorable furry life-form sim on the block—seems aimed at the advanced Creatures player. It's a toolbox with an Observation Kit (which provides much-needed Norn updates and alerts), an Object Injector Kit (need I say more?), new Norns and objects, and a preview of the Gene Editor. Casual students of this enchanting critter-growing toy can probably pass it up, but devotees will find it hard to resist the added configurability and variety. (Mindscape; www.mindscape.com; \$20) B

Nuclear Winter's a bit tepid and petite when placed beside the earlier Duke Nukem 3D expansion, Duke It Out in D.C.—only seven levels, with two of those being variations on

levels from the original game. On the other hand, you'll enjoy the gaming references that have been inserted in place of Duke's cinematic ones...and the crinkly unwrapping sounds as you collect the odd red-bowed power-up. (WizardWorks; www.wizworks.com; \$15) C+

Microsoft made some mistakes before finally grabbing the brass ring with Age of Empires, but Monster Truck Madness wasn't one of them.



The Monster Track Pak is a solid complement to that pleasant big-wheeled racer. It includes 77 additional tracks, eight more trucks, five utilities to help make the most of them, and an efficient front end. Now if Microsoft would just add a little more depth to the view... (Head Games; www.headgames.net; \$20) B

MicroProse followed up last year's excellent Conquer the Universe collection with a pair of less well-considered invasions. Conquer the Skies includes in its flight-sim quartet the original, disk-based versions of 1942 and Fleet Defender rather than the "gold" CD-ROM updates. You also get Gunship and Falcon 3.0. Conquer the World (alternate title: Sid Meier Conquers the World) has Colonization, Pirates! Gold, Railroad Tycoon Deluxe, and Transport Tycoon—but not TT Deluxe. Huh? (Micro-

Prose; www.microprose.com; \$28 each) Skies, **C**; World, **B**

Bits: Revenge of the Toys isn't so much a game as a set of gamelike desktop distractions: free-throw shooting with a moving backboard, a brickless variation on Breakout, skeet shooting, and six other samples of mindless fun. But while all quite well done, they're also eminently disposable, and you'll be finished with it

within an hour. (Cyclops; www. desktop toys.com; \$20) **B**-

Head Games' unofficial level pack So You Wanna Be a Redneck may have had the numbers (75 levels), but Suckin' Grits on Route 66, the official add-on for Redneck Rampage, has the invention and consistency. Any hillbilly stereotypes left unexploited in Redneck Rampage—gator farm to oddity museum—have been incorporated in this pack's dozen treks, along with the same mordant humor, in-depth design, dense graphics, and tornado-warning skies. (Interplay; www.inter play.com; \$20) B+

The computer opponents know their stuff, and you can play via LAN and the Internet. However, with only three classic card games, **Hearts, Spades & Euchre** fairly pales beside recent releases from Sierra and Interplay. (Westwood; www.westwood.com; \$25) **C**=

The first two "interactive multipath movies" in the Choose Your Own Nightmare line—The Halloween Party and Night of the Werewolf—are heavy on story and low on interactivity...which might not be so bad if they didn't also look like they were cooked up in the extra bedroom. Children in the targeted 8-to-12 bracket may giggle at some of the humor, but the scariest thing here is the pale, doll-eyed polygonal kids who play the heroes. (Brilliant Digital Entertainment; www.bde3d.com; \$25 each) Party, D; Night, D

STRATEGY CHEATS & TACTICS CHIEATS

Another month of good health and spirits, plenty of weapons, and a ticket to anywhere. Nine different games, more than seventy different ways to play the way you want to play. So go ahead and win—or just enjoy a little psychedelic, big-head, mutant monster fun. Mmmmm...cheats.

Excalibur 2555 A.D.

During gameplay, hit Esc to pause the game, and, while holding down F12, press one of the following arrow-key combos. After releasing F12 and resuming the game, you should see a message indicating the cheat.

up, **up**, **right**, **right**, **up**, **up**, **up**, **up**: Unlocks all doors (except the room you're in).

up, up, left, left, left, left: Gives full health.

up, up, left, left, right, left, left: Maximum sword power.

left, right, left, up, right, up, up, up: Level skip.



F-22 Raptor

During the game, hit t, then type:

it's not my fault: Completes mission.

never tell me the odds: Can't be hit.

we can rebuild him: Repairs damage.

there can be only one: Invincibility.

i'll be back: Reloads stores.





FIFA 98

At the Player Edit screen, edit any player name to these names to get the corresponding Special Options box:

eacrocks: Big-head mode.

johnny atomic: Take a dive.
dohdohdoh: Crazy ball.

ur1ofus: Invisible walls.

xplay: Hot potato.

footy: Silly moves.

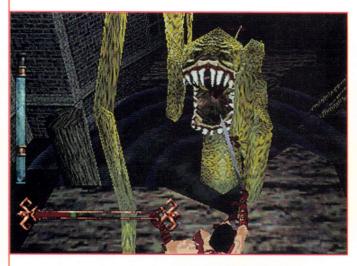
Hellfire

To access some secret options, create a text file called command.txt and place it in your Hellfire directory. Then type multitest cowquest theoquest bardtest (on one line) in command.txt. This enables LAN and modem games, two new quests (the cow quest and the theo quest), and a new character class, the Bard. (The Bard reuses the Rogue's art, but can use two weapons at once and has the Identify spell as her natural ability.) Cool, eh?



Nightmare Creatures

Type the following codes at the main menu, then hit Enter. (Note: You must type the **everywhere** cheat before you can use any of the others.)



everywhere: Lets you access any level.

boulon: Unlimited lives and items.

bronko: Lets you play a monster.

gu: Enables slicing.

Pandemonium 2

Enter these codes as passwords at the Password screen:

NEVERDIE: Invincibility.

IMMORTAL: Gives you 31 lives.

HORMONES: Full health.

HORIVIONES. Full fleatin.

MAKMYDAY: Weapons.

GETACCES or **OCMCKKEJ**:

Level select.

GONAHURL: Rolling camera view.

SKATBORD: Speed mode.

GENETICS: Mutant mode.

ACIDDUDE: Psychedelic textures.

JUSTKIDN: Regenerating monsters.

Scud: Industrial Evolution

Enter these passwords at the Password screen to leap to the corresponding level. (Note: Spaces between words must be observed.)

2. OLD MAN

3. SHORT BUT TALL

4. DIET MNIP

5. TITHES

6. POPCORN

7. NOT POODLE

8. PACKET OF CRISPS

9. MEDICINE

10. SNOWBOARDING

11. 216BIT

12. RENDERING

13. BEAR GAME

14. HORSE

15. KIDDYWINKS

16. JALLABALLABON

17. HOT BEVERAGE

18. MUNTRESS

19. PANTERA ROSA

20. RENNAISSANCE WEDDING

21. HECTIC MAN

Test Drive 4

At the Save Game screen, select slot 10, type one of these cheats, then hit Enter. (Note: If using cheats in multiplayer games, all players should have same cheats enabled; otherwise, the game may crash.)



sraclla: Unlocks all cars.

levellla: Unlocks all tracks.

noaicars: No AI racers in LAN game.

LAIN gaille.

stickier: No 3D collisions.

aardvark: All collisions

turned off.

itslate: No special effects (3Dfx version only).

spazzy: Distorts picture.

bandw: Black-and-white mode.

Grand Theft Auto

colour: Makes screen color

again.

miktrout: Big cars. mpalmer: Mini cars.

gonzon: Fast-forward mode. **gonzoff:** Turns off FF mode.

birdview: Overhead view.

nitroxxx: Makes horn button activate nitro boost.

creditz: Shows credits. **bobcred**: Extra credits.

At the character-select screen, press Delete and enter one of the following codes:

6031769 or itstantrum: Unlimited lives.

buckfast: Hit numpad (*) key for all weapons.

hate machine: Raises point value.

iamthelaw or stevesmates: No police.

itcouldbeyou: Gives you 999,999,999 points.

itsgallus, nineinarow, or super well: All levels, all cities.

porkcharsui: Diagnostic mode.

suckmyrocket: Gives you all weapons, armor, and a

Get Out of Jail Free Card.

QUICK BITS

Joint Strike Fighter

At the Pilot Select screen, hit Enter + left Ctrl + right Ctrl to get access to every plane/helicopter in

the game.

Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Let us know what games you'd like to see cheats for by contacting PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; email: ccohen@pcgames. com. Due to the high volume of mail, we can't reply to most letters personally, but we'll do our best to print cheats/tips for games that get the most requests.

TECHNOBABBLE HARDWARE SPOTLIGHT

The K6 Alternative

By George T. Chronis

n the wild and competitive days before Pentiums, gamers thought nothing of buying systems powered by AMD or Cyrix CPUs. But in the years since, the "Intel Inside" marketing campaign and early lackluster performance (compared to Pentium chips) of the AMD-K5 and Cyrix 6x86 convinced a vast majority of the computer-buying public that there were no alternatives to Intel. That all changed when AMD released the K6 last year.

The K6 is a great CPU, and it's cheap. If you were buying at press time, an Intel P233 CPU would've cost you \$314, a Pentium II 233 would've set you back \$287, and a K6 233 a paltry \$192. In performance, the K6 233 screamed to a point directly between P233 and Pentium II 266 scores in PC Games processor tests. Unlike Intel, AMD has stuck with the same Socket 7 form factor used by Pentium CPUs, while Pentium IIs use the more expensive Slot 1 technology, which resembles a videogame cartridge. So, the same motherboard that can handle a P200 and P233 will likely support K6 chips. If you have an older P200/P233 motherboard, your BIOS may be upgradable. This is good news for computer

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K6 CPU	. \$192
ASUS TX-97 Motherboard	. \$140
Fujitsu 4.3GB HD	. \$250
STB Velocity Video Card	. \$175
Gamer 3D Voodoo Card	. \$180
Panasonic 24x CD-ROM drive.	. \$120
64MB SDRAM	. \$130
Monster Sound	. \$130
ATX Case	\$70
Keyboard	\$20
1.44 Diskette Drive	\$20
Mouse	\$15
	The second second second second

\$1,442

Total

makers who want to hold costs down and gamers who want a hotrod for the price of a Hyundai. With its main competition Socket 7–based, Intel has slashed Pentium II 233 prices below P233's. This is an effort to

make consumers migrate to its proprietary Slot 1 motherboards before Socket-7 CPUs like the K6 can gain a foothold.

So how does the K6 stack up as a game machine? To answer that question, PC Games went out and built one from scratch—and found it stacks up very well. The K6 was optimized to run Win 95 applications, so Direct3D games are its strong suit. Jedi Knight running on the two Pentium II 300s reviewed in our March 1998 issue turned in between 30 fps and 60 fps. The PC Games K6 233 averaged between 40 fps and 80 fps. Where the K6 system falls short is in its slower floating-point-unit (FPU) processing capabilities. That shortfall is most apparent in the few FPU-intensive 3D games like GLQuake and Hexen II, which both posted 25 fps to 30 fps—compared to between 30 fps and 40 fps on the Pentium IIs. Our K6 also posted 25 fps to 30 fps in Quake II, which

is about what you get with a similarly config-

Stay outta my

territory!

ured Pentium II 266.

Since the initial rollout of the K6, AMD has tossed off its all-business attitude and embraced

gamers. Not only has the chip maker become the prime sponsor of the Professional Gamers' League, but it also has a beefy new FPU chip variant due mid-year called the K63D, which should erase the Pentium II's FPU

advantage. AMD also has a 266MHz model in the works.

In putting together our K6, we chose the same ASUS TX-97 motherboard (\$140) that Falcon Northwest uses for its Pentium systems. ASUS makes a solid mainboard that supports a range of different MHz speeds for the

adventurous of you out there. It also has fast Ultra DMA hard-disk support and USB ports built in. We added a Fujitsu MPA3143AT 4.3GB Ultra DMA drive (\$250) and 64MB of speedy SDRAM. For video, we chose STB's hot Velocity (\$175), and since you need a 3Dfx Voodoo card in addition to D3D, we added Guillemot's 4MB Gamer 3D (\$180). Why not Canopus' 6MB Pure3D? They're so popular they're hard to find, and the Gamer 3D is one of the most recent Voodoo cards to hit the market. For sound, we went with Diamond's Monster Sound 3D audio card (\$130), which works just fine by itself, as long as you don't stray into DOS-only games. To spin our CD-ROMs, we chose Panasonic's 24x drive (\$120), which we like a lot better since we discovered how to eliminate its noisy vibration—by inserting a piece of bent index card between the drive and the system casing. Now it's quiet as a lamb.

This system, loaded with high-quality components, cost us only \$1,442. You could substitute cheaper components, but for a full-



on game machine, that's not bad, compared to Falcon's \$1,895 entry-level P233 reviewed in the March issue.

But the question that dogs *PC Games* editors and gamers alike is whether buying a K6 system is a safe investment. There's no Advanced Graphics Processing (AGP) port, no "Intel Inside" sticker on the case. Still, the K6 is a solid investment with an upgrade path in place that will boost performance significantly later this year. And if past experience is any guideline, AMD will charge you a lot less to upgrade to a K63D 266 than Intel will for faster Pentium II CPUs. The dif-

ference between the K6 200 and the K6 233 is \$26. The difference between the Pentium II 233 and the Pentium II 266 is \$246. The difference grows to \$476 when you compare processors with the Pentium II 300.

As for AGP, if you must have it, Via has already developed the Apollo VP3 chipset, which gives Socket 7 motherboard makers the option of adding an AGP port. Socket 7 motherboards with AGP should start appearing later this year.

So, if your current motherboard will support a K6 processor, or if you want to buy a K6 system, you won't be left in the cold. But we suggest that you go with the 233MHz K6 or higher for performance reasons if you're buying today, or wait a couple of months for the K63D.

HOW FAST IS IT?

Processor Score: Video Score: 188 231

Hard Drive Score:

207 200MHz

*PC Games Labs uses a standard Acer 200MHz Pentium as a baseline system for comparison, with baseline benchmarks of 100 in processor, video, and hard-drive categories. Computer systems are compared using WinBench 97.

SparQ

RATING: A-

aybe it's too late to buy a Zip drive. Prices may hover near a hundred bucks, but a hundred megs just doesn't seem all that impressive anymore.

Concerns like this are exactly why SyQuest has come up with the \$199 SparQ 1GB removable cartridge drive. SyQuest is also convinced that there are legions of gamers who don't consider themselves savvy enough to add a second hard drive to their PCs. If the company's right, these gamers will embrace a sturdy, easy-to-use 1GB removable cartridge drive with a respectable 12ms access time (EIDE version) to run games from. From our experience, we think SyQuest's on the right track.

Unlike previous SyQuest drives, the SparQ is PC-only and comes in both internal and external versions. The external connects via the parallel port, the internal via your PC's IDE ribbon cable.

The external model installed easily and worked flawlessly. The only drawback is that SyQuest employs a DOS-install executable—despite the fact that the executable is intended for Win 95 systems—that might confuse some gamers. A separate Win 32 setup executable would make more sense.

The SparQ uses the same friendly, Zip-like plastic casing last seen in the earlier 230MB EZFlyer series, although the cartridge is now much sturdier. Traditional SyQuest cartridges were prone to breakage, but the SparQ cartridge can survive being dropped on the floor or a journey via Airborne Express. Cartridges are also reasonably priced at \$99 for three.

The internal version—for both a 3.5-inch and 5.25-inch bay—was a bit trickier to install. However, the difficulties stemmed

more from the fact that the PC we installed it in was already chock-full of goodies, and some tweaking was required to free up the needed resources. That said, a more comprehensive Troubleshooting section would've helped—the paper documentation is a bit thin in the "if this doesn't work try this" category. The box says a full kit's included to install the SparQ in your machine, but you'll be out of luck if you expect to find an EIDE ribbon cable in there (and there's not even a blank cartridge included). But once you've got the cable and installed the SparQ, software setup is a breeze using the handy-dandy Starter cartridge (very similar to the Zip drive's).

The SparQ does come with a variety of utilities, including SegaSoft's HEAT onlinegaming software; SPRYNET; McAfee WebScan; and NovaStor NovaDisk SE backup software.

As a home for games, the SparQ performs well in nondemanding SVGA games, especially real-time strategy titles. Anything with 3D textures, however, proves that the SparQ isn't quite fast enough for all game duty. But as inexpensive, portable, high-capacity storage, the SparQ's a great deal, although the

external unit's huge power-supply will be a burden to anyone having to lug it around. (SyQuest Technology; 800-245-7334; www.syquest.com; street \$199)

—George T. Chronis and Steve Klett



TECHNOBABBLE HARDWARE SPOTLIGHT

It's a different experience.

Revolution 3D

s much as we like the nVIDIA RIVA 128-based boards from Diamond, STB, and Canopus, Number Nine has crafted a worthy competitor in its 128-bit 8MB Revolution 3D. Admittedly, there may be some nomenclature confusion with Number Nine's other Revolution 3D products. The difference is that Number Nine sacrificed the option of adding memory and offers the 8MB 3D card for a more fashionable street price of \$199, \$100 less than the original Revolution 3D with the same RAM.

RATING: B+

The 8MB Revolution 3D is one of the beefier 2D/3D boards around.

With the Revolution's 8MB of fast SGRAM, and PCI and AGP versions available, it's unlikely gamers buying this card will experience video-card envy any time soon. That is, unless you want to play GLQuake II or any OpenGL game in Win 95, which isn't supported yet (Number Nine is working on the drivers). But as a Direct3D card, the 8MB Revolution 3D delivers exceptional performance. On a P200, Jedi Knight turned in between 40 fps and 70 fps in 640-by-480-resolution 3D mode—very respectable. As for SVGA, hardware VESA support is built in, so SVGA resolutions beyond 640-by-480 are supported. That's

great for real-time strategy games: Age of Empires and Dark Reign displayed 800-by-600 resolutions in pretty zippy order. But the Revolution 3D isn't as spiffy a performer in first-person SVGA. On the same P200, standard Quake produced 15 fps at 640-by-480 resolution, which is five to ten frames less than STB's Nitro 3D delivered.

What kind of gamers should consider the 8MB Revolution 3D? If you play a lot of SVGA games like Age of Empires or Dark Reign but have yet to get the full 3D

> bug, then this card's hot 2D performance in RTSGs will please you. And the 8MB Revolution 3D will handle the growing number of D3D games just fine. If you plan on running Windows NT, you definitely should consider this card: It comes with a full set of registered OpenGL drivers and Windows NT drivers, making it one of the better choices for that platform. (Yes, that means you can run

GLQuake II.) Lastly, if you use your PC for work on occasion, the 8MB Revolution 3D puts out an extremely clean video signal. That's important if small fonts hurt your eyes, because clean signals result in an exceptionally sharp display. (Number Nine; 800-438-6463; www.nine.com; street \$199)

—George T. Chronis

HOW FAST IS IT?

Video Score:

209

*PC Games Labs uses a standard Acer 200MHz Pentium as a baseline system for comparison, with baseline benchmarks of 100 in processor, video, and hard-drive categories. Computer systems are compared using WinBench 97.

3DZoneMaster

RATING: B+

attached Techmedia's 3DZoneMaster—a wireless ultrasonic input device—to my PC, expecting to be duly unimpressed. After all, new gaming devices are popping up faster than moles in a game of Whack-A-Mole, and initial offerings from companies new to the field are rarely anything but cheap imitations of previous models. And wireless? Wireless input devices have never given us any reason to consider trading in our mouses.

Well, the 3DZoneMaster knocked my cynicism out of the park. Just changing the angle at which you're holding the 3DZoneMaster moves the mouse cursor. Unlike infrared units, it didn't even need to be pointed at the L-shaped receptor that rests on the monitor. Moving the cursor via slight handshifts took some getting used to, but the learning curve was much less steep than I expected. I was expertly manipulating desktop folders in just a couple of minutes.

This pistol-shaped device serves as both joystick and mouse (its "dual mouse" function allows you to retain your current input device), and its gaming potential was equally impressive. I configured the 3DZoneMaster for Quake II, an easy process that amounted to simply assigning key settings to the four-directional joystick and three buttons on top of the device, as well as the two triggers below.

It was swiftly obvious that picking a bead on moving Stroggs was going to take a little longer to learn than simple Windows maneuvering. There was also an over-compensation factor of leaning the 3DZoneMaster too far one way while trying to change the angle of vision. But this was easily handled by assigning Center View to one of the buttons for a quick snap back to the middle of the action. Once I got the hang of it, pistol-whipping was a blast—especially in arcade games such as Virtua Squad, which comes bundled with the device (along with MechWarrior 2).

Overall, the 3DZoneMaster deserves the 3D in its name. The price is a little steep, but even if it doesn't replace your favorite gaming device, it's a helluva slick way to zip around in a game. (Techmedia; 800-379-0077; www.techmedia.net; street \$99)

—Joel Strauch

Cyclone 3D, 3D Program Pad

RATINGS: A-/B+

InterAct sure knows how to press my button. Now, if I can only press all of theirs!

See, InterAct has a couple of new products out—the 3D Program Pad gamepad and a joystick called the Cyclone 3D. If you're button-happy, these are meant for you. The Cyclone has 17 fire buttons (yep, that's not a misprint—17); the Program Pad has 10, plus an eight-way directional control. There are games that don't have as many action-keystrokes as these things have buttons, y'know?

But for games featuring user-programmable buttons, both units are useful. The Cyclone is aimed particularly at flight-sim players, who may appreciate the ability to set controls to multiple stick-buttons. It'll certainly take someone used to the complexity of a set of flight controls to make full use of the programmability—it's not at all an intuitive process, and the slim manual isn't much help. For that reason, it's better to use the included 3DPS program disk—which allows onscreen button assignment—until you're used to the direct-programming process.

I gave it a whirl with Starfleet Academy. The stick handled the programming nicely, saved out the key assignments to a recoverable file, and brought up my choices quickly in the middle of battle. A nice addition is the ability in "page 1" programming to assign as many as three keystrokes to a button, although that reduces the number of available keys ("page 2" allows one key per button, but you can use all 17). The stick itself is made of light but solid plastic, lacking the heft of a Thrust-Master or Suncom stick, and it has a reasonably comfortable grip that's molded to fit in either hand. The Cyclone's play was a bit loose in Starfleet, but not so sloppy as to be obtrusive.

The 3D Program Pad works on the same programmable motif as the Cyclone, with four

The Cyclone 3D has buttons aplenty.

extra thumb-manipulable buttons on the pad's underside that'll mostly be useful for fightinggame or sports combo moves. What makes it a good choice next to the likes of Microsoft or Gravis pads is its \$39.99 sticker price. Amazingly, that's the same tab for the Cyclone, too. At value for price, these are very real choices for your controller needs. (InterAct; 800-732-6866; www.interact-acc.com/interactpc/; street \$40)

—Don St. John

Audiotrix 3D-XG

RATING: B

How much sound card do you need, anyway?
Essentially, that's the question posed by
Mediatrix's Audiotrix 3D-XG card—which is,
in its own right, a first-rate product. There's
a part of the gaming community that wants
sound-control features that rival what hardcore musicians demand from their computer
equipment—a much tougher crowd on sound
cards. What this means is one sound card

that'll meet all your gaming-

MIDI sound needs, as well as just about anything else short of having the Chemical Brothers right in your living room. However, life isn't that simple. For all the capability the 3D-XG has, it weighs in at a comparable list price of \$299. If you're relying on your sound card for purely game-related reasons, that may be too much.

Why? Well, the "XG" stands for Yamaha's XG MIDI system. MIDI, of course, is a set of file instructions that tells a MIDI-compliant sound card what "voices," or sounds, already loaded on the card's hardware to generate—frequently many at once. That means you can have lots of sounds for very little memory/storage space, which is why so many games use MIDI tracks. Virtually all those games use GM—General MIDI, a common-denominator set of sounds.

The 3D-XG plays any GM sound it gets, but it also offers Yamaha's extended set of XG sounds, a much richer and more complex palette. Now, if your games had XG support, you'd run, not walk, to find the 3D-XG—the sound's that good. Plus, it's a snap to install: With Mediatrix's instructions, I had the ISA card popped into two different machines in a jif. I did encounter a problem with a lost CD-channel in a machine with onboard Dolby Surround support, but that problem

is likely to crop up only in the newest computers.

Trouble is, there isn't a game on my shelf—or yours—with XG support. Mediatrix wasn't able to supply me with a list of XG games. In essence, this card's power is wasted on anyone who's using their computer just to play.

Then again, you're looking at just \$50 more than a Sound Blaster AWE64 Gold. If you have a life beyond gaming—hacking out your own music, or even simply surfing MIDI

files on the Net—then the 3D-XG may well offer that extra value. (Mediatrix; 800-896-1333; www.mediatrix.com; list \$299)—Don St. John



The Audiotrix 3D-XG may have more power than a gamer needs. Even new games like Quake II don't support XG.

TECHNOBABBLE S.O.S.

Send your S.O.S. queries to PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; email: sos@pcgames.com.

By Patrick Marshall

Awhile back, I double-clicked on a Zip file, it asked me what program I wanted to use to open it, and I chose WAR2ED95.EXE. Now whenever I download a Zip file, such as the Quakeworld Zip files, I get that little icon with a map on it for the Warcraft II map editor. Then when I double-click on it, it gives me an error message instead of asking me where I want to unzip my file. How do I fix this?

Soltani

Via email

When you double-clicked on the first Zip file and Windows asked what program to use to open it, the idea was that you would specify where Windows could find your copy of PK-Ware's PK-Zip or a compatible program. Instead, you specified the Warcraft II map editor. Accordingly, Windows created a relationship between Zip files and the Warcraft II map editor so that it would automatically use that program whenever you double-clicked on a Zip file.



You need to change that relationship. First, make sure you've got PK-Zip or a compatible program installed. (You can download the shareware version of PK-Zip at www.pkware. com.) If simply installing the Zip program doesn't automatically cure your problem, you'll have to change the relationship between file type and executable manually. To do so, and assuming you're using Windows 95, go to Windows Explorer and select View/Options, then click on the File Types tab in the dialog box that appears. Then find the Zip-file format in the list of file types and highlight it. Click on the Edit

button, then highlight the Open command in the window that appears. Finally, click on the Edit button and, in the appropriate field, specify the name and location of the program you've installed to manage Zip files (like PK-Zip).

I want to upgrade my RAM from 16MB to 32MB. Each of the four slots on my PC has a 4MB SIMM in it. Can I take out two of the 4MB SIMMs and put in a 16MB SIMM and an 8MB SIMM?

Bullman

Via email

Maybe yes, maybe no. You can certainly replace two of the 4MB SIMMs with higher-capacity SIMMs, but many PCs require that each set of two SIMMs be of the same capacity. That is, if you remove the last two SIMMs, you may have to replace them with either two 16MB SIMMs or two 8MB SIMMs. Check your computer's manual to be sure. And remember, memory is very cheap right now.

ONARE	CATEGORY	PRODUCT	DETAILS	OUR RATING
	PC	Falcon Mach V	Falcon Northwest; 800-258-6778; approx. \$4,000	Α
T III	Monitor	Optiquest V775 17-inch	ViewSonic; 800-888-8583; approx. \$600	Α
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What Good Are Bad-Guy Games?

Are gamemakers on an acceptable, fun-filled trip...

ntisocial behavior has long been the bread and butter of computer games: after all, where would we be without all the nefarious killers, crooks, and assorted sickos that've plagued society since the beginning? But not until recently have major titles begun to cater to a new type of gaming experience—having the gamer play the sicko. Scarface endorses the trend heartily in felonious **bold**, while Spaz launches an angry protest in hyper *italics*.

Just as the controversy over Postal began to subside, the Internet

was abuzz again over Grand Theft Auto. It's getting attention, positive and negative, for having the gamer play as an amoral hood who carjacks and kills for cash and points. Now all the yokels who decried Postal for its brazen badness can hop on a new bandwagon. I, for one,

don't see the harm. Gaming should offer us a wide variety of vicarious thrills; why shouldn't some of them be homicidal? Enjoying these games doesn't make us bad people, as Sipowicz would say.

Pop-culture me all you want, Tarantino. What bothers me about Postal and GTA isn't their violence—it's the way they empower the bad guy and negate the good guy. In Quake II, you run around a huge maze and Super Shotgun bad-guy aliens or players with futuristic weapons. Fine with me: I'm either saving the world or preying on fellow predators. That's a far cry from the truly immoral notion

of walking out the door one day with a shotgun and shooting—even executing—innocent bystanders. Or from carjacking random drivers. I think if a game's violent, that violence should at least be justifiable, and toward a positive, heroic end.

All computer games are fantasy. Why? Because they're not really happening; they're make-believe. It's legitimate for a parent to worry about how their kid will handle that fantasy. But I find it problematic when a company (like Interplay) is willing to distribute Redneck Rampage but not Grand Theft Auto, citing as its criterion that GTA presents "real" situations. There's nothing real about it. It's a game, and it's useless trying to distinguish "safe," cartoonish violence from "dangerous," realistic violence.

You've got a point about determining the "realness" of violent games—I mean, who's to judge? But here's the real problem with most Fun Lovin' Criminal games: Too often, the bad-guy twist is a weak attempt to cover

up crappy gameplay. Strip away the screams and moans, and Postal's an overly repetitive, 2D yawn; turn Carmageddon's human roadkill into robots (as Interplay did in Germany because of local laws), and the game's just another arcade racer with terrible handling. Your character's psychotic behavior is the only thing unique about these games, and that's good reason to avoid them.

The games' merits are subjective, but this one fact is beyond argument: such games push the boundaries of computer gaming

into new, uncharted territory. Gaming as a whole is made better by companies releasing risky games, and there's nothing riskier than simulations of wanton violence. The edginess of these titles spurs game designers to try exciting new angles. That's a trend we want to see more of—game designers willing to tempt the scorn of the PC (politically correct) Police by offering something bold.

No! Riskiness is a great concept, but there's nothing risky about making games violent—it's just a cheap, easy

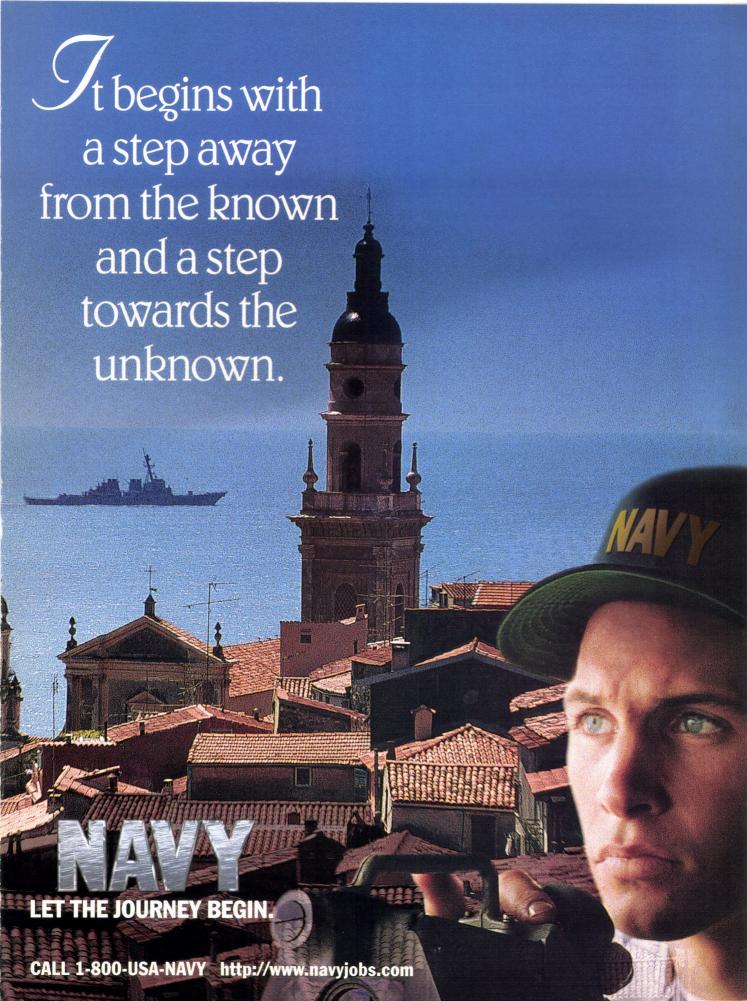
way to appeal to bloodand-guts fans. And violence-wise, too many of these bad-guy games pretend that an evil twist elevates an otherwise mediocre game. It doesn't. Games are no different than other media: Original-good means instant classic; original-bad means instantly passé.



It's funny that you equate "antisocial" with "instantly bad." Dungeon Keeper's a great game, and it has you playing an evil dungeon-master. I'll bet you hate it, and I guarantee that the next classic I'm-the-Bad-Guy game will be met with instant scorn by people like you as well.

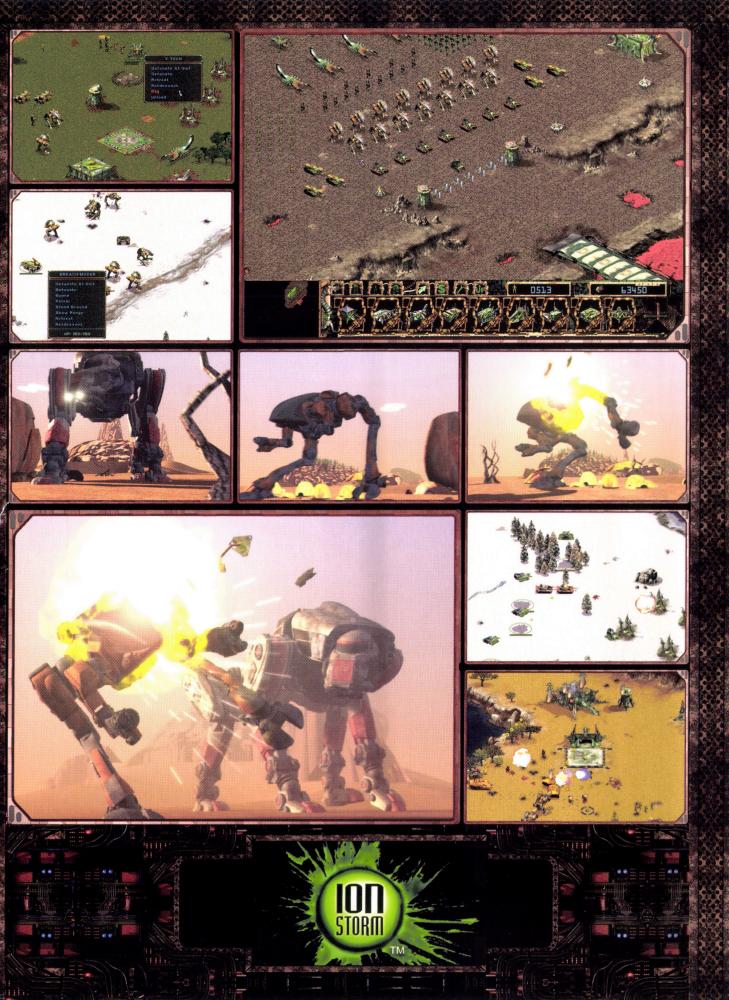
Wrong: I love DK because it's an intricate, compelling bad-guy game where your evil isn't the only saving grace. And it's clearly a fantasy. And you're battling it out with other evil dungeon-masters, too, not just the faceless heroes. If the next action-based bad-guy game can pull off this mix, it'll be a welcome turn.

Having stroked his ego with a little Grand Theft Auto, Scarface has his machine gun loaded and his eyes on the neighbor's Mercedes. Spaz, moral advocate that he is, has called the cops and is calming down with the help of some Frogger.



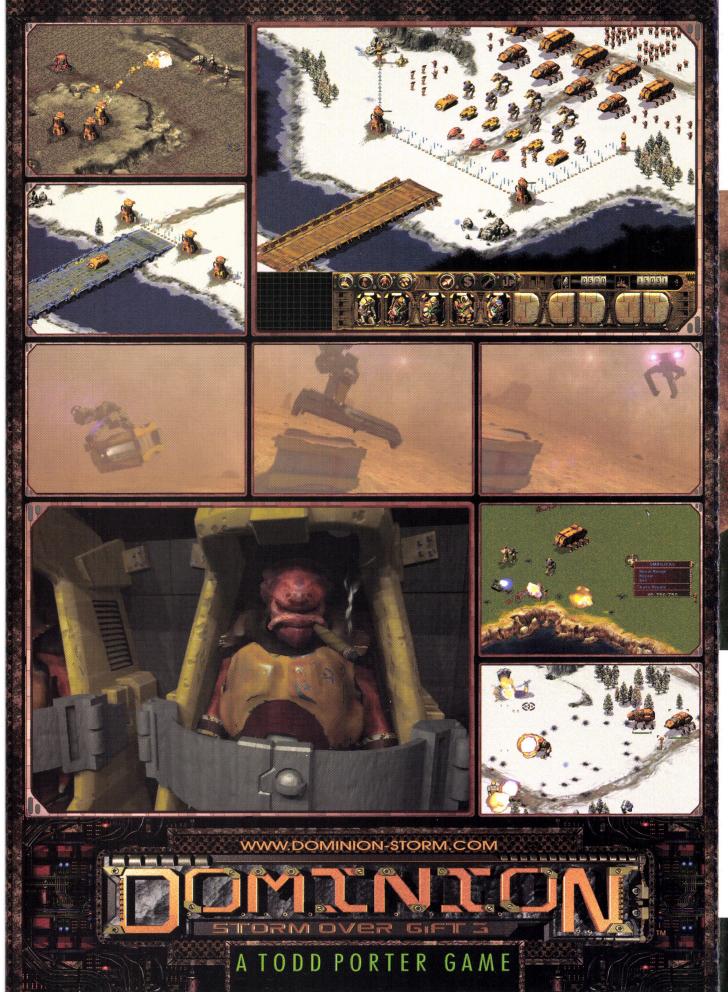


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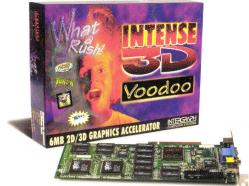
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